With Infallibles



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ANOTHER PRAYER

It was three months that "Salimah" had not gone to the mosque. She thought about the mosque especially when she heard the sound of the 'Azān'. It was three months now that she had become a mother. She had no one to look after her baby so she could attend to the mosque for praying. Her husband was a peddler date-seller who .walked through the alleys of Medina, from morning to night, in order to run his family

He neither had time to take care of his baby, nor money to pay someone to look after it. Salimah was content with her life, but she always had a strange feeling when she heard the Azan. She was reminded of the pleasant and warm voice of the Prophet in the mosque. How she longed to go to the mosque as before, when she heard the .sound of the Azan and attend the mass prayer

Her first baby was born three months ago. It was a crying baby and did not keep quiet. Most of the time, Salimah was tired and sleepy. She knew that going to the mosque and praying behind the prophet would make her fresh and happy. But there .was no one to leave her child with

That day, like every other day, was ending when once again the sound of Azān "echoed through the sky of Medina..."Allaho-Akbar

Salimah felt deeply sad at heart. She stared at her child, listening to the Azān. The baby was asleep and breathed quietly. Salimah could not take it anymore. She got up and put on her clothes. She performed ablution and slowly took her child in her arms. She went out of the house in a hurry, to get to the mosque in time for mass prayer. She looked straight ahead of herself and not paying attention to her surrounding strode quickly towards the

.mosque to be in time for the prayer. Her feet moved involuntary towards the mosque

She became calm when she arrived at the mosque. The prayer had not started yet. She was joyful for being at the mosque in time. She slowly entered the mosque. Salimah looked at her child. The baby had woken with a sweet smile on its lips. Salimah thought, "Why did I trouble myself all this time? I could've brought my child to the mosque like now. It's a pity to pray alone at home and not attend the mass prayer. It's a blessing, even if I pray just one "Rak'a" with the prophet." Salimah had not yet stood in the rows of prayer, when she heard the Muazzin crying, "Ajjeloo be Salah," meaning, hurry up to prayer. Salimah quickly stood in one of the rows. She was looking around for a suitable place to put her child, when she heard the voice of the ."Prophet saying, "Allaho-Akbar

The praying started. Salimah laid her child on the straw mat, which covered the floor of the mosque. Her child was quiet. Salimah glanced at its face and wished that the baby would keep quiet until the end of the prayer, so she could perform a peaceful ...prayer after three months. Salimah prepared herself quickly and stood to prayer

The pleasant voice of the Prophet was heard. Apart from his voice, nothing else could be heard. It seemed that the mosque, the birds, and the sky were all silent and still, to listen to the voice of the Prophet, praying. Salimah listened to the Prophet reciting the Surah, Al-Fatihah, with all her heart. For three months, she had missed listening to the recitation of this Surah in the Prophet's voice. Salimah's heart was filled with .happiness and serenity

,With the hearing of "Allaho-Akbar," all prayers prostrated

"Sobhana Rabi-al-Azime va behamdeh...Allaho-Akbar"-

.And suddenly Salimah's baby started to cry

Salimah's heart sank. In the pleasant silence of the mosque, the sound of her child seemed very loud. The baby was crying continuously. Salimah was not aware of the way she finished that Rak'a. She blamed herself, for disturbing others by bringing her baby to the mosque. She wished to finish her prayer as fast as possible, to take her .child away

.Allaho-Akbar"...all prayers stood up. So did Salimah. The baby continued to cry"

The Messenger of God recited the words of the prayer hurriedly. He performed the prostrations very quickly. The second Rak'a was done very fast. The third Rak'a was .also done a lot faster than the other evenings

Salimah's child was still crying. Salimah was so anxious that she did not realize that the Prophet had ended the prayer sooner than before. Salimah was sad at heart and ashamed that she had disturbed the peace of other prayers. She was about to take her child and go, when she confronted with the smiling face of the Prophet. The Prophet had kneeled next to the baby and he was smiling at it. The baby became quiet .when it saw the smiling face of the Prophet

The prayers were surprised of the quick prayer of that evening. They were even more surprised when they saw the Prophet getting up straight after the prayer. When the Prophet returned they all went towards him and asked the reason for what he had .done

"?The Prophet answered, "Didn't you all hear a baby weeping and crying

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Everyone understood that the Prophet had finished the prayer sooner, to quiet the child. Salimah too, heard what the Prophet said. She knew that the Prophet had finished the prayer sooner so she could care her baby. She was not embarrassed anymore. She turned to the baby and said, "You naughty child, you cried so much, that you attracted the attention of the Prophet to yourself. When you grow up, I shall tell ".you how much the Prophet loved the children

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NOT OUT OF RAGE

After some thirty days of tiresome march the army of Mecca reached the outskirts of the city of Medina. Abu Sofyan, commander of Meccan infidels, had, since a long time before, prepared this large army. His plan was to carry out a big raid upon Medina, which was the center of the new government of Islam. He had also planned to kill the holy Prophet and his loyal friends and overthrow Islam. The Meccan infidels, in order to make sure of the success of their evil plan, concluded a pact with the Jews of Medina, who were great enemies to Islam, and intended to attack Medina with an .army of about ten thousand soldiers

When the Meccan army reached the city of Medina, they were faced with a strange scene. Round the city a wide canal of three to four meters depth had been dug. Inside the canal, too, many obstacles had been placed, so that despite their every effort the .infidels could not overcome these obstacles and enter the city

The Muslims of Medina had learned of the infields' raid. So, on the suggestion of Salman Farsi, who was an Iranian Muslim and a faithful friend of the Prophet, they .had dug this canal round the city before the enemy's imminent attack

The Meccan infidels who never expected such a measure, halted in awe and amazement. They had cherished the hope of entering the city on their horsebacks, easily and unchecked, to massacre the Muslims. But the canal round the city proved to .be an insurmountable barrier for the pagans

Then, Abu Sofyan broke the terrible silence of his frustrated army with a loud cry which showed his rage and anxiety. He ordered his troops to camp near the canal so

that he might consult his army officers to find a solution. Very soon the tents were .raised and the city of Medina surrounded by the army of Abu-Sofyan

.The siege lasted many days. Abu Sofyan's army soon became tired and weary

They were deeply enraged at being unable to find a way to infiltrate the city. Inside the city the Muslims who were about three thousands in number, with their trust in God, were preparing for the confrontation and each time the enemy army intended to .pass the canal, they would pour showers of arrows upon them

One day, however, an incident took place. In the infidel army there was a soldier named 'Amr Ibn-Abduwod who had won great fame as a brave warrior among all Arabs. He had become weary and angry that the siege had had taken so long. So, he mounted his horse and surveyed the canal several times. Suddenly, he chose a sport where the width of the canal was shortest and managed to jump over to the other .side of the canal

This caused a great uproar in both armies and all eyes turned towards him. The .Meccan infidels encouraged him with their cries of support

When 'Amr reached the vanguard of the Muslim army, he waved his sword in the air and boastfully challenged a match, saying: "Hark! Is there anyone who dares to step "?into the field to confront me

The Muslims held their breaths in the breasts and bowed their heads. To fight against .such a powerful warrior was not a simple matter

Suddenly, a voice from among the Muslim army, broke the silence. It was the voice of Ali (p.b.u.h.) who had volunteered to fight Amr, and was begging Prophet's permission .to enter the field

The Prophet had not yet consented to Ali's request to fight when Amr once more shouted: "Hark! I have kept on calling for a fighter so many times that my throat had got hoarse. Is there no one to take up the challenge? O Muslims? Do you not claim that on being killed you will send me to hell? So let one of you come and send me to "!hell or go to heaven himself

Again Imam Ali begged the Prophet's permission to fight 'Amr, but again the Prophet .did not give permission

Amr kept on bragging and with each bravado the shouts of the infidels' acclaim filled' the air. Then he galloped his horse round about the field and for the third time called .for a challenger

Again Ali volunteered to take up his challenge, and this time the Prophet gave him the permission to do so. Imam Ali, smiling and confident with a heart full of faith, took firm and steadfast steps towards his adversary, and addressed him saying, "Amr, keep "!quiet! Now your challenger is coming to you without the slightest fear

All eyes were turned to the field of battle. The infidel army's clamor gradually died down and they stretched their necks to see who had dared to take up the challenge of their great champion. The Prophet who had his eyes on the gallant Imam Ali said: ."Now the whole of infidelity is facing the whole of faith." Then he prayed for Ali

Amr pulled back the rein of his horse and quieted it he then peered to see the' challenger who had dared to confront him. When Imam Ali came in full view, 'Amr looked him up and down, and then said in a tone of surprise: "Young Man! Who are "?you that wish to lose your life so easily? Have you not heard my name

"!Ali responded: "I have heard your name; and I am 'Ali Ibn- Abi-Taleb

On hearing 'Ali's name, 'Amr trembled with fear and remembered Ali's valiant bravery with battles of Badr ans Uhod. Then be urged on his horse to get nearerto Ali, and said in a low voice: "O son of Abi-Taleb! You are very young. You have plenty of time to live in this world. It would be a pity to take your life so soon. Go back and let someone else "!come to fight me

Ali took another step forward and said: "O 'Amr! I have come to fight you. Did you not "?brawl for a match

Amr reasoned: "I have been a friend of your father, Abi-Taleb, and have no wish to' "!see you immersed in your blood

Ali said: "O 'Amr! I have been told that if in the field of battle your adversary makes ".three requests to you, you will surely grant one of them

".Amr said: "Yes. What you have heard is true'

Imam 'Ali then said: "Now I have three requests from you; one of which you must ".fulfill

"?Amr said: "What are they'

The Imam said: "First, give up infidelity and idolatry and submit that Muhammad is the ".rightful Prophet and thus live with honor and freedom among the Muslims

"?Amr said: "This is impossible. What is your next request"

The Imam said: "Abstain from fighting us and return from the very way you have ".come. Your horse can take you to the other side of the canal

Amr retorted angrily: "If I return to the other side of the canal I shall be disgracefully reproached by the other soldiers. So, you can be sure that I shall not

".return before I strike a heavy blow on the Medanese army

At this answer Imam Ali smiled and concluded: "My third request is that you dismount "!from your horse to fight me

Amr became so greatly enraged that he immediately leapt down from the horse and .charged against Imam Ali

.Both armies kept perfect silence, and waited for the outcome of this duel

Amr waved his sword in the air and brought it down with all his might upon Ali's head, but Ali swiftly protected his head with his shield, and the clash of the sword and shield echoed loudly in the silent field. For a moment the joyful uproar of the infidels .dominated the groans of the Muslims

As a result of this blow Imam 'Ali's shield was split and the corner of 'Amr's sword wounded the Imam's head slightly. 'Ali dressed his wound in a brisk and before 'Amr could collect himself for another assault, the Imam advanced him. He clasped the hilt of his sword firmly with both hands and swiftly swished 'Amr on the body. The flash of the sword sparkled the eyes of the infidels' army and the great historical blow of truth .was dealt by Imam Ali

The blow was so forceful that it could have shaken a mountain, and this it could have shaken a mountain, and this single blow knocked the wretched 'Amr down. Both armies craned their necks in curiosity to see the proceeding amidst the clouds of dust. .They could not quite make out the one who was lying down on the ground

At this moment a Victorious chant put an end to the deadly expectation of both armies. It was the voice of

Imam 'Ali, chanting Allah-o-Akbar [God is Great]. The whole army of Islam, hearing 'Ali's voice, joined in chanting, Allah-o-Akbar, which sank the hearts of the infidels to .the bottom. 'Amr's wounds were so deep that he was unable to rise

Imam 'Ali sat on 'Amr's chest, as it was the code of conduct to end his pair. 'Amr was livid with rage and envy at his defeat by the lion-hearted man of Islam. This mental pain was so great that he forgot his physical pain. So in his last moment he resorted to an insolent and unmanly act, and in his helplessness to move, he suddenly spat on the .face of Imam 'Ali

This moment another heroic act began to take place. Imam 'Ali, who had raised his sword to finish off the work lowered it slowly, rose from 'Amr's chest, and cleaned his .face. He let out e deep sigh, looking up at heaven, and began walking to and fro

.The enemy forces, 'Amr and even the Meccan army were struck with astonishment

:They asked themselves

?Why did 'Ali rise from 'Amr's chest-

?Why does he not end it all -

?Why is he walking to and fro-

?Why doesn't he finish off the work-

?What is 'Ali thinking about-

There were so many 'whys'. But no one but God and His Prophet could know what was in 'Ali's mind or the reason for it. In those moments an utmost faith in God and in His satisfaction was surging within the mind of the Imam. When 'Amr committed his mean and lowly act, 'Ali became very angry, and everyone expected him to kill 'Amr at once. But contrary to the general expectation, 'Ali did not do so. At that moment he thought that killing 'Amr

at that instant would be attributed to his own anger. So he rose from 'Amr's chest and walked about until his anger subsided. Then he knelt on 'Amr's chest and with a manly blow, which was dealt only for God's satisfaction and not in revenge, killed 'Amr and .returned victoriously to the Muslim army

Amr possessed a valuable chain-mail and sword. It was customary among the Arabs' that the victor took the mail and weapon of the vanquished for himself. But Imam Ali .in his chivalry left those objects of 'Amr in the field

Some days later when 'Amr's sister heard the news of her brother's death, she inquired who had killed her brother. When she was told that Ali had done so, she said without any show of uneasiness and anger: 'If my brother had been killed by anyone else but Ali, I would have wept and groaned. But I know that Ali is a manly, noble and peerless warrior, and my brother's death at the hand of such a man need not be ".lamented

This historical combat of the Imam filled the infidel army with despair, and after a .while they abandoned their siege of Medina in defeat and went away

The significance of Imam Ali's strike in the battle of Ditch (Khandagh) was so great that the Prophet said: "Ali's stike in that battle was worthier than the religious ".devotions of all human beings and angles

REVELATION OF DELIGHT

A heavy cold silence has taken over Medina. The people of the town, tired from their .daily work have gone to their homes to rest

The stars have decorated the sky. The earth is lighted from the soft, pale glow of the moon which has spread its rays like a silk cloth over the small mud-built houses of .Medina

Medina is silent and quiet and the only sound which gives it life is the echo of the .strong steps of the Prophet. He is getting closer to Ali's home

The Prophet is accompanied by two of his followers. They too are pondering about .what is worrying the Prophet

Not only them, but the entire town knows how much the Prophet loves Hasan and .Hussain

Everybody knows that the Prophet gets sad from what saddens Hasan and Hussain and is pleased from what pleases them. Everyone knows that his love for them is not just the love of a grandfather for two adorable sweet grandsons. It's a divine love; a divine affection. All Muslims know that they must follow the Prophet and love Hasan .and Hussain

Because lots of times before, they had seen the Prophet in front of the eyes of ".everyone saying, "Oh, God, I love Hasan and Hussain. Love whoever may love them

Now the Prophet and two of his followers have reached Ali's home. The sweet warm :voice of the Prophet echoes through the house

Dear Ali, darling Fatima, greetings to you. I've come to visit my children with two-?others. May we come in

:It is the eager voice of Ali and Fatima that is heard from inside the house

.Greetings to you and the bliss of God! Welcome. Come in please-

First the scent of the Prophet and them himself and his followers enter the house. But this time Hasan and Hussain don't come running towards the Prophet. This time they .do not throw themselves in his arms nor give themselves to his kisses

Tonight Hasan and Hussain are in their sickbeds and their illness has weakened them. They open their eyes with difficulty. But they do not find the power in their limbs to get .up

The Prophet, worried and impatient, goes towards their sickbed, rolls his cloak around .his legs and sits next to the children kissing their faces

What's the matter my dear ones? I hope God removes this illness from you and give- .your health back

Hasan and Hussain circle their hands around the Prophet's neck and hug him. Although this house belongs to the commander of the Islamic army, but nothing is .found in it to serve the guests

Ali apologizes for not having anything to serve the guests. However, the Prophet and his followers know that Ali's poverty is his honor and the honor of Islam. They know that if Ali wanted, he could have had the best of livings. It was the lifestyle which Ali .and Fatima had chosen, themselves

.Therefore, the guests are served with love, kindness and sincerity of the host

:Before leaving, the Prophet asks Ali

?Dear Ali! Don't you want to perform a vow for the cure of their illness-

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:Ali answers without hesitation

Yes, I will vow three days of fasting. If God gave back their health I will fast for three- .continuous days

:Fatima, hearing what the Prophet and Ali said, she says

I too, vow that if God gave back the health of my children, I fast three continuous- .days

:Hasan and Hussain open their tired eyes and say

.We will fast for three days too-

.And they feel the lips of the Prophet on their faces

Fezzah" is a woman who has been the servant of Amana, the Prophet's mother, for" years. Now, she has voluntarily come to this house to be the companion of Fatima and learn the lesson of life from her. She, like the rest of her dear ones, vows to fast for .three continuous days for the cure of Hasan and Hussain

* * *

It is a little after their vow that God gives back the health to Hasan and Hussain. They .both get up from their sickbeds, strong and refreshed

It is now the time to fulfill their vow and the household are all fasting. For breaking their fasts, there is only grain for five breads, which Fatima and Fezzah prepare and .cook

The breads are cooked; one per person. They all sit waiting for Ali to come back from .the mosque, so they could break their fasts together

When Ali returns from the mosque, they all sit down to eat after a day of fasting and .hunger

:Their hands have not reached the food when a knock on the door is heard

I am a poor, wretched beggar. Oh household of the Prophet! I pray God to serve you-from his heavenly foods. Help me. My family and I are hungry...

The beggar has not finished his words yet that Ali rises to give his bread to him. Fatima's bread is put on top of Ali's and then Hasan, Hussain and Fezzah do the same? Five breads, the entire dinner of a fasting household is given to a beggar.

Now, there is only water to be served. The five fasters break their fasts with water alone, and thank God!

The second day of fasting is here. Again five breads are prepared for dinner. After two days of hunger and fasting, the hands go towards the hot breads which are the only food in the house; when again there is a knock on the door...

Oh, household of the Prophet! I am an orphan child that has nothing to eat. Please-help me.

A hand, with five breads in it, comes out from behind the door. The breads are given to the child along with good wishes and blessings. Again, the fasters break the second day of their fast with water. Hunger has drained their energy.

The food for the third day of their fasting is the same as the previous nights; flour enough for five breads.

Ali is a powerful man and hunger is something which he is used to. However, how can the slender and delicate Fatima, Fezzeh, and the two children who have just recovered from illness bear two days of hunger and not eat even a single piece of bread?

Anyway, they are fasting on the third day of their huger.

As they get closer to the time of breaking their fasts, their hands start to shake from starvation. The eyes

of Hasan and Hussain are sunken and they cannot walk nor stand on their feet from hunger. Ali returns from the mosque and there are five breads to eat and a bowl of water. Who knows how these three days have been for the members of this family? !How appetizing this piece of bread looks

Hasan and Hussain pull themselves towards the food and stretch their hands towards ...the breads like the others. But... there is again a knock on the door

.The sound of the knock leaves the hands hanging in the air

Hello to the household of the Prophet! Oh, Mohammad's family! Please help a captive- ...that has been hungry for a long time

Nobody hesitates for a moment. The hands that had been stretched towards the breads to take a piece of them, put the breads in one pile and put them in the hands of !the captive

The only thing that gives this pained family strength and power is the joy of giving and self-sacrifice; the joy of giving when you are in need; to take the morsel from your starving mouth and giving it to another hungry being. Only God can value such a deed .and know its worth

:Ali looks at the pale yellow faces of his children and thinks with himself

visiting the Prophet will lessen pains and makes we forget our hunger. He turns to- ,Hasan and Hussain and says

.let's pay a visit to your grandfather-

The joy of seeing the Prophet excites the children and the three of them go towards .his house

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When the Prophet sees the colorless and pale faces of his grandchildren and their .delicate bodies, which shake from hunger, tears fill his eyes

How can I bear to see my children in such a condition? Oh God, witness what the - family of your Prophet do to gain your pleasure. Get up my dear ones to see how my ?darling Fatima is doing. How has she spent these three days

Fatima's eyes are sunken from hunger, and her legs are weak, but she still continues .to pray

The Prophet embraces his darling Fatima and cries in a way that his shoulders .tremble

?Who can see the loved ones of the God in such a condition and be unmoved

At this time the air is filled with a beautiful fragrance and Gabriel comes down to the .Prophet

.Oh Mohammad! Accept the gift which I have brought for your family-

?Gabriel! What have you brought with you-

First the mercy and bliss of God for this family, and then verses about their- .matchless deed has been sent down

Real value is in a work that brings about the pleasure of God. I, the faithful Gabriel, the bringer of revelation, and the link between you and God, do not find a greater gift .than this

In these verses, the almighty God has introduced this fasting group as "the righteous :ones" and has described their state in heaven

God protects the ones who perform vows and are fearful of the Day of Judgment and :give their food out of love of God to the poor, the orphaned and the captive, saying

We only feed you for God's sake. We desire from you neither reward nor thanks." ".Surely we fear from our God, a stern distressing Day

Therefore God will guard them from the evil of that Day and cause them to meet with .ease and happiness

.And the reward of them for their patience is Heaven

.Reclining therein on raised couches they shall find therein neither heat nor cold

And the shades of the garden will come down over them. And its fruits will hang low ...and easy to reach

(Surely this is the reward for you and your endeavor is accepted and recognized.(۱

Now, Hasan, Hussain, Fezzeh, Fatima, and Imam Ali no longer feel hungry. Their starvation does no longer bother them and it is replaced by feelings of happiness and .glory

.They all bow and thank their God for this wonderful great gift

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(Quran (۷۶:۵-۲۲ -۱

THE MID–DAY TRAVELER

The earth was hot and fire was pouring from the sky. The crickets were chirping in the thorny shrubs. Three men came down from a hill and a cloud of dust rose in the air. The first man stood at the bottom of the hill. He loosened the cover on his face and with great tiredness said, "we have been searching this desert for hours, but we haven't found a single drop of water."

The second man sadly looked around himself. Tired and sweaty, he filled his hand with dust, let them in the air, and quietly said, "The earth is dry, and I can't smell any water. Perhaps we are destined to die of thirst in this desert."

The third man crossed the hill and the two other men followed him. The hot earth was covered with soft sand and their legs sank in it up to their knees. Exhausted and thirsty, the three men searched around themselves but the hot desert lay ahead of them in every direction. Suddenly one of them shadowed his face with a hand, pointed in a direction, and cried, "Look!"

On the other side of the hill were a few palm trees. The palm trees had bent their long leaves towards a small pond. A sheep was lying in their shade. A distance further, a little hut was seen. An old woman was sitting next to the hut, weaving. The three men ran towards her in a hurry. Seeing them, the woman got on her legs terrified and swung her walking stick in the air.

One of the men said, "We don't mean you any harm, we are travelers who have suffered from hunger and thirst in the desert."

The woman looked at them with doubt and said, "Who are you?"

We are pilgrims of Ka'ba. We will be grateful if you give us some water," said the"
.man

"?Are you traveling to Mecca on feet"

The man dropped his head and said, "I am ashamed of my God not to walk on feet to
"....we have a pledge with our God to travel the way to his house on feet

The woman brought down her stick and said, "The door of my house is always open to
".the pilgrims of Mecca, go in the hut and rest

The three men went into the hut. The woman milked the cow. Moments later she entered with a bowl full of milk and said, "drinking water in this hot desert will weaken the eye sight. I have brought some milk to remove the thirst and tiredness from your
".bodies

They drank the milk with fervor. "I live with my husband in this hut. He always goes out to the desert in the morning and returns at dusk. I know that you are hungry, but I
.don't have anything in the house...," continued the woman

The woman became silent and stared at the sheep lying in the shade. The win blew softly and moved the palm's long leaves. The woman thought with herself, "If I kill the
".sheep, I can provide these tired travelers some food

The woman walked slowly towards the sheep. One of the men got up, went towards the pond, and performed ablution. The woman looked at him. His body was trembling and looked pale. "Is this shaking of your body from hunger and thirst?" the woman
.asked, concerned

No," answered the man. "I want to stand to prayer before the God of the world. This"
".trembling is out of fear of Him

There was something familiar in the man's face. "Where have I seen him?" the .woman thought with herself

The man was fair and his hair was twisted and thick. His eyes were as black as the nights of the desert. With seeing him, the old woman remembered one of her childhood memories. A day when her mother had climbed one of the palm trees and picked the white unripe date sprouts to drop them down for her. That day, the palm grove had a strange scent. It was as if the air was filled with the scent of all the green groves of the world. At that moment, his father had suddenly come running to the palm tree and cried, "I have wonderful news. A man called 'Mohammad' has invited everyone to worship of the One God. He rejects the worshipping of idols and criticizes the people for buying of girls. He is the messenger of God and he has brought the "...message of good fortune from the sky

The old woman took a deep breath. He looked at the man again and thought, "Who is "?this man? Why does he remind me of that day

"?The man lifted his head and said, "Mother, what are you thinking about

The woman came to herself and answered, "I... I want one you men to kill the sheep ".so I could make food for you

No, mother," the man replied, "if your husband returns home and asks about the" "?sheep what will you answer him

The woman held her head up and said, "My husband will never leave anyone hungry ".in the desert

Then, she asked one of them to kill the sheep. She quickly prepared a meal. After eating their food, the three

men got up and left the hut. One of the men turned to the woman and said, "thank ".you for your hospitality and kindness. Now show us the way to Mecca

The woman pointed to the east. The sun was gathering its last rays from the earth. The three men set off on their feet. The woman stared at them as they disappeared in .the sunset

Moments later the sound of her husband echoed through the desert: "where are you woman? Bring some milk for me to drink. Don't you know that I'm thirsty and tired "?when I come home

"...Troubled, the woman answered, "You know...our sheep... I mean I have

The man looked towards the palm trees and the empty spot of the sheep and asked "?with fury, "Where is the sheep

The woman looked towards the eastern horizon and quietly said, "They were three men; Three tired and thirsty men. Their food and water supply had finished. I quenched their thirst with the sheep's milk and then I asked them to kill the sheep and "...I

What are you saying?" the man screamed. "Am I hearing right? You have killed our" "?sheep for three strangers

They were not strangers," replied the woman as she kept her eyes on the eastern" horizon. "I recognized something familiar in the face of one of them; the light of ".prophets and the dignity of the great ones

.What are you saying? Who was he?" the husband yelled"

The woman like one talking with herself, slowly said, "He looked so much like ".'Mohammad' the Messenger of God

t:٣٠

The man hit himself in the head with both hands and cried, "Have you gone crazy woman? Don't you know that the Prophet has passed away many years ago? Don't "?you remember that you grieved on his death

.I swear to God that I have not forgotten that day," answered the women"

The man screamed, "Then are you pretending to be crazy to free yourself from my punishment? You have given away our only sheep and you want to get away from ".punishment? Say that you regret what you have done

The woman brought her head up and said, "If I had a thousand sheep, I would have ".killed them all for them

The man got hold of his walking stick and rushed towards the woman. The woman ran towards the hill, terrified. The man could not follow her any more and screamed, "I swear to God, if I see a shadow of you on this desert, I would dig a whole and burry .you in it alive," and looked at the women disappearing on the other side of the hill

❊ ❊ ❊

The sound of the camels' bells could be heard from the alleys of Medina. The sun was shining on the long palm leaves. The wind lifted the soil from the ground and dispersed them on a grey-haired old woman. The woman had bent down and was busy picking the date seeds from the ground and put them in her basket. The people of Medina passed the alleys quickly. The woman lifted her head and looked at the sun, which had reached the middle of the sky. She thought with herself, "the sun has ".reached the middle of the sky but my basket is not half-full yet

t:٣١

A grey-colored pigeon settled on the ground, next to the old woman and picked at the date seeds. The old woman gazed at the pigeon and said, "So you're after the seeds "?like me. Do you pass your days by selling date seeds too

The pigeon circled itself and picked at the ground again. The old woman said, "I know that you are hungry and you're forced to find your food from the date seeds. If I had a house, I would take you with me and give you wheat and barley. I would then sit next "...to you to make baskets from the palm leaves. Just like those days

The woman sighed and thought deeply. The pigeon took a little twig in its bill and flew. It put the twig on the edge of a mud-built wall. The soft wind blew the twig in the air. The old woman moved her self. She wiped the sweat of tired face with the back of her hand and again bent herself to the ground. She thought with herself, "whatever it was, it has passed, but I do not regret what I have done. The face of that man reminded me of the Prophet. He had an oath with his God to travel the way to Mecca on foot and when he stood to pray his body trembled out of fear of God. At that " .moment, I felt as if he is like a bright pond reflecting the sun

"?She brought her head up and looked at the sky and said, "O' God, who was he

Suddenly the woman felt a heavy look on herself. She averted her eyes from the sky and gazed around herself. Her heart trembled in her chest. A man had kneeled next to the old woman and was looking at her. The man had a reddish face, and his eyes were as black as desert night. The woman came to herself and said with terror, "My God! ".Save me from this dream. This is his vision, looking at me

t:٣٢

She got up, pulled her basket after herself, and tried to get away from the man. The "!man stood up and said, "Wait

.The woman froze on her spot

.Do you know me?" asked the man"

.No, who are you?" the woman replied with a shaky voice"

I am the person who was your guest along with two other men in a mid-day," said" .the man

.For God's sake tell me, are you that guest or his vision?" asked the woman"

The man said, "Today, when I was crossing this alley, I saw you bent down on the ground, picking date seeds. It is now the time for you to rest. I went to give you one "?thousand sheep, and one thousand gold Dinars. Will you accept this gift from me

.One thousand gold Dinars?! But who are you?" the stunned woman said"

I am a servant from the servants of God who was your guest one day," answered" .the man

The man wrote something on a piece of paper. He gave the paper to the woman and .went away

.But who are you?" the woman asked desperately"

A man walking the alley looked at the old woman surprised and said, "how can you not ".know him?! He is 'Hasan, the son of Ali', the second Imam of the Shias

The woman trembled, looked at the Imam disappearing on the end of the alley with .astonishment

The wind blew softly and filled the air with the scent of ripe .dates

I AM SAKINAH

I am Sakinah, today is Ashoora of the year ۶۱ A.H., and here is Karbala! Perhaps an hour has passed noon. I do not know. From morning to now, for us, it has seemed like a lifetime; especially these moments that father has gone towards the battlefield. It is hard to gaze at the cloud of dust rising in the battlefield and to hear the shrieks of the .enemy, while father is among them; it is very hard

The sound of the drums beating and the shrill screams of the enemy make our hearts .sink

.We are surrounded with dust and blood

.The sunshine above us is hot and the earth beneath, even hotter

Thirst, thirst, our mouths are burning from thirst, our lips have dried up like parched clay, our tongues are hard and dry in our mouths and our faces have become pale from the extreme heat. My father had only seventy-two soldiers while Yazid has an .army of tens of thousands

Since morning, my father's followers have gone to the battlefield one by one. They stood bravely against the enemy's army, they fought with courage, they killed tens of .the enemy soldiers, and then they were martyred

.Now, my father is all alone and surrounded by the soldiers of the enemy

Oh, how I wish the distance between the tents and the battlefield was not this long. .How I wish I could see father fighting. How I wish father had let me go with him

A father fighting alone against a vast army and his daughter having no news about him?! The only thing visible from here is a haze of dust and dirt; and the only thing .hearable is the uproar of the enemy

t:۳۵

Yesterday, the wrinkles of weariness were clearly visible in my father's expression. Thousands of people from Kufa and other cities had written him letters and promised to support him if he rose against Yazid's ruthless government...but only seventy-two .people came to help him

Those seventy-two people were very dear to my father. My father told them, "You are the best of people. I do not know any followers more loyal and faithful than you; ".no one has ever had followers as fine as mine

.We all cried when they were martyred but father did not show his sorrow

When my older brother Ali-Akbar fell down from his horse we all lost heart but father .did not

When the enemies' arrow ripped Ali-Asghar 's throat in my father's hands, we started .wailing and weeping, but father stood firm

When my uncle Abbas , who was father's flagman, the sentinel of the tents and the provider of water, fell from his horse and the enemy cut his body to pieces...my father kept his patience; but his stature was bent and he put his hands on his waist crying, ."My back broke"

When all of my father's followers became martyred, my father prepared himself to go to the battlefield, but first he gathered all the women and children and told them with calmness, "Make you ready for affliction and hardship. Be sure that God is your protector. He will soon save you from the enemy and you shall have a fine destiny. .And your enemies will experience all kinds of torture and suffering

.Instead of these sufferings, God will give you blessings and treat you with generosity

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".So do not complain about anything and do not say thing that decrease your dignity

.After this, we were all sure that father would be martyred

"?I said, "Father, have you surrendered yourself to death

.Then I burst into tears and cried and cried

I did not want to act impatiently, but I no longer had the power. I was not the only one that was restless. Even my aunt, Zainab who tried to comfort us, was wiping away her .tears

:Father hugged me and said

"!?Sweetheart, how can someone with no allies not surrender to death"

:I started sobbing again and said

"?Under whose care will you put us"

Father wiped my tears with his hands and lips and after kissing my wet eyelashes ,said

I put you under the care of God and His blessings; He who supports you in this world" and the afterworld. Have patience, my daughter, about the things that God wants and don't complain, because this world will come to an end and but the afterworld ".remains

.I did not complain and I was not ungrateful, but I cried and cried

How could I not cry, while my father, the best father in the world, was going to the ?battlefield all alone to stand against thousands of men

Father said farewell to everybody and stroked the children's hair affectionately. Then he whispered things to my aunt Zainab that we could not understand. After that, he .told her to bring him an old garment

,We were all surprised and asked

t:۳۷

"?Why do you want an old garment"

:Father answered

The enemy is an unmanly one. After killing me, they will take my clothes as spoils. I" want to wear an old garment under my clothes so my body will not be bare after I'm ".martyred

It was as if father was going to a splendid ceremony. He put on his clothes, fastened his sword and armor, wiped the sweat of his forehead with his turban, then tidied his grey beard and prepared to go...to go towards a savage enemy that was awaiting .him with barbaric shrieks

None one could prevent him from going and even if he did not go, the enemy would .come to the tents

No one could prevent him from going, because he had foretold his death before this .day and he had said that Islam would only survive if he were martyred

,No one could tell him

"!Father, don't go"

"!Uncle, don't go"

"!Brother, don't go"

Because he was the Imam of all, and we all knew that the Imam only does what God wants. However, we only wanted him to stay with us one more moment, so we could .see him, speak with him, and listen to his voice a little longer

,My aunt Zainab, trembling, cried out with tearful eyes

"...Not so fast dear brother, not so fast"

Father stood and for one last time looked at the crowd of distressed women and children who were crying after him. If anyone other than father had seen this scene,

he would have surely slowed his pace; but there was no

t:۳۸

change in father's faith and decision and he did not slow his pace. He just gave us an affectionate wave with his hand, put us under the care of God, and hurried towards .his horse

I could not bare it any more. This was too little for me; I, who in a few moments would lose such a good father and become an orphan. I stood up involuntarily and without father seeing me, ran towards his horse. Father was sitting firmly on his horse and was getting ready to go. However, the horse did not move because I had clasped my .hands tightly around its legs

.The horse was staring into my eyes and was crying with my cries

Father got off his horse and held me tight to his chest. He wiped my tears and said, ""Oh my daughter, my dear daughter

I said, "Oh father. When Moslem was martyred, you hugged his orphan girl and "?patted her head. If you go and I become an orphan who is going to pat my head

Father's eyes filled with tears. I could feel his heart breaking. While fighting back his tears, he slowly whispered to me, "Sakinah, my daughter, please do not cry, because after I go you will shed many tears. While I am here, while I am still alive, do not set .my heart ablaze with your tears

".Oh, best daughter in the world, truly after I go you have the most right to cry

,I knew it was impossible, but I don't know why I said

Father, take us back to Medina beside the shrine of our grandfather, the Prophet" ".((peace be upon him

,Father turned his innocent look towards the enemy and said

t:۳۹

".You know it's not possible my daughter"

.The shrieks and screams of the enemy were becoming louder and father had to go

Father set off and I could still feel the warmth of his dried lips on my cheeks. Now I can hear the clanging of swords and the neighing of horses and the savage screams .of the enemy

We are standing beside the tents; we are holding our breaths and shivering with .fright

Oh, I think this is my father's horse coming towards us without a rider; its head and... ?...mane covered in blood. Is this the sound of my cry or Fatima's or Roghayah's

t:۴۰

A GIFT FROM SKY

The call to evening prayer echoed through the alleys of Medina. This is the moment, when he comes to the mosque for praying. I can recognize him even if I see him from a distance. He walks slowly and he always has a few of his followers by his side. His face is pale and his brow is calloused from nightly bows and prostrations. The light of day is gradually fading and darkness is taking its place. I am hiding behind a palm tree. .I see him nearing slowly

He is my cousin. He is 'Imam Sajjad'. I have seen him helping the needy many times. He pays the debts of the broke and gives food to the poor at his house. I like all other poor men need his help. Everyone in the town knows this. He knows better than anyone else, how broke I am. However, he has never helped me. Today, I have .decided to cry out to him everything that is in my heart

I approach him slowly and shout at him. I swear at him and tell him what is in my !heart. How rudely I talk to him and what terrible things I accuse him of

I am astonished. A signal from him is enough to make me an injured and wounded man by his followers. But, he patiently looks at me in silence. I understand nothing of his look. I finish my words. I have nothing else to say. He is standing calmly with the same look on his face. How I wish him to return my rude words. How I wish him to shout back at me and punch me in the face. I look around myself. Every one is looking .at me with anger and hatred

Imam Sajjad takes a step towards me. His mysterious silence is terrifying me. My heart is pounding like a drum. Imam fixes his eyes on me for a moment and then softly says, "Brother, if what you are saying about me

".is true, may God forgive me, and if it is not true, may God forgive you

I cover my face with my hands and run away. I don not know what I'm running away from; for fear of my life, or from the shame that I feel growing inside me. I pass the .narrow, dark alleys in terror

When I come to myself, I find myself at home. My body is still trembling and I am burning from inside. I hold my head in my hands. How many times have I sworn at him? And each time he has given me an answer, so patiently and calmly, that has set .me ablaze

The chirping of crickets tells of the emergence of night. Suddenly my heart leaps. Night; this is the moment, when an angel appears in our neighborhood from the sky. Every night, when it is completely dark, an angel comes down from the sky and divides the contents of his sack among the poor people of our neighborhood. Everyone has forgotten me. But God hasn't. If he had, he wouldn't have sent this .angel to me every night

When it is night, that angel comes down quietly, and one by one knocks on the doors of the houses. He has a leathern bag full of food and firewood and he gives them to .the poor people. This is why he is known as "the sack holder" in our neighborhood

Oh... my God! Darkness has drawn its cover over everything. It is getting closer to the time when "the sack holder" comes to my house and I am waiting for him. I open the door slowly and look at the alley. I hear the children of my neighbor crying from behind the mud-built walls. It is night, but the food is not yet served at the neighbor's house. I hear the quiet voice of my neighbor 'Samia', who is trying to calm his hungry child. The children are hungry and mothers are desperately searching

for a piece of bread in their homes. A black shadow emerges from one end of the alley. It's him. He takes his steps quietly and slowly. His back is bent under the burden that he is carrying. He knocks on the door of the first house he gets to. A woman opens the door and says, "Hello to you, O holder of the sack, hello to you O angel of .God," and the angel takes out two bags from his sack and gives them to her

I go inside and close the door. A moment later, a knock on the door is heard. My heart leaps. How I wish I could see his face, but he covers his face with a cloth. I open the door with trembling hands. The alley is quiet and empty and only the chirping of crickets breaks the silence of the night. I can no longer hear the children of the neighbor cry. The angel puts down his leather sack. Tonight, instead of food, he puts a .pouch full of coins in my hand. My hands tremble even more

When I come to myself, he has gone and disappeared. Nobody knows who he is. But I do. He is an angel that God sends every night to help the poor. I wish I could see him going up towards the sky. Pity, for he disappears so softly and lightly that I have never .seen his departure

"?Samia! Have you seen his departure"

No, I haven't. They say he disappears before going to the sky. Then he opens his" ".wings softly and flies towards the sky

Once, when he was handing me the bag of bread, I gripped his hands and held them against my eyes. His hands smelled like roses. They had the scent of green bushes. He softly took his hands out of mine and stroked my head. His stroke was warm and .wonderful, like that of a mother towards her child in a cradle

t:۴۳

* * *

Our neighborhood is under the dark cover of night. This is the moment, which 'the sack holder' arrives. I know that the neighbors are waiting for him behind their doors. And am I not waiting?! Everyone has deserted me. I'm ill and tired. 'The sack holder' is the only one who understands my condition. If it weren't for him, how hard and tiring .my life would have been

The minutes are passing slowly. The air is heavy and a sad odor reaches my nostrils from the damp cracks of the wall. The sound of the cries of children has reached the sky. Tonight, their cries are shriller and louder than usual. When is the angel going to ?come

I look at the sky. It is dark and black and there is still five days left to a new moon. The cry of children reaches its peak. I put my hands over my ears so that I don't hear anything. But, no; this is not just the sound of the children crying. Tonight I can hear the adults crying too. The men are crying; the women are crying, O my God…What am I hearing? I had never heard the people cry out of hunger! Their voices get louder .every second

I feel everything crying, the walls of the house, the floor of the alley, and even the colorless wooden doors of the house. Am I hearing right? Is this Samia crying? How painful he cries! Is he crying out of hunger? No, I Know Samia. He has been my .neighbor for years. He didn't cry like this even on the sudden death of his wife

I open the door in a hurry. The entire town is crying. The tall palms have drawn their heads closer to the ground and the sky has pulled a veil of cloud over its face to hide its tears. The alley is full of people. Every one is crying and hitting themselves on the head. Nobody

answers me and I run from one side of the alley to the other. Samia is sitting alone next to a palm and he is shrieking. He fills his hands with dust and pours them over his .head

The palms hit their branches on their trunks and Samia hits his head. I sit beside him ,and desperately ask

?Samia, why are you crying? Is your daughter ill"

His shriek echoes louder than any other sound in the alley. Again, I ask "Samia, ".answer me. You are piecing my heart

The angel went to the sky; Forever. I saw his departure with my own eyes. "Samia" .cries

I helplessly ask, "What are you saying? The angel hasn't come to our houses yet; how "?could you see his departure

Samia hits his head on the palm trunk and cries," That angel was Imam Sajjad and today he was martyred. When they were washing his body, every one knew from the black callus on his shoulders that every night he had carried a sack on his back and ".given food to the needy

And I no longer hear the rest of his words. I feel the whole alley swirling around my head. I close and open my eyes several times. I put all my energy in my legs and head .towards Baghi' cemetery

Next to the grave of Imam Hasan, I see a grave that is covered with fresh earth. I madly throw myself on it. The soil smells like the hands of the 'sack holder', the scent .that filled me with the love of God

t:۴۵

Abdul Malek' was the caliph. He was leaning on his throne and listening to his vizier.' The vizier was standing at attention, and was reading out the report of what he had done. When he finished the report, Abdul Malek thought for a while, and then took the paper from the vizier so he could read it more accurately. When he looked at the paper, his eyes fell upon a sign at the top of it. Abdul Malek stared at the sign. He brought the paper closer but he couldn't understand anything from the sign. He had forgotten the vizier's report and he tried to find the secret to the sign. When he realized that he could get nothing from the sign on the paper, he told his vizier, "What "?is the meaning of the sign at the top of your report paper

The vizier who seemed to be seeing the sign for the first time answered, "I don't "!know, my lord

Abdul Malek said with surprise, "Are you saying that you don't know the sign at the top "?of your own paper

"The vizier took another look at the paper and answered, "No, my lord! I don't know

Abdul Malek called another one of his viziers. The second vizier came forward and bowed. Abdul Malek gave him the paper and said, "Let's see, can you understand "?anything from this sign

The vizier bowed again and took the paper. He stared at the sign at the top of the paper. After a while he took a step forward and said, "May the caliph be in good health; the sign on the page is not Arabic. It seems to be in the Roman language. Allow me to bring someone acquainted with this language so he could inform you of the ".meaning of this sign

t:۴۷

With the caliph's order, a number of agents went after a man who was acquainted with the Roman language. The agents brought him very quickly to the presence of Abdul Malek. Abdul Malek gave the paper of his vizier to the man and said, "Tell me ".what you understand from the sign on the paper

The man stared at the sign and after some moments said, "May the caliph be in good health! This sign is the symbol of the Christians. In addition, there is a sentence in the ".sign written in Roman, which is the motto and belief of the Christians

Abdul Malek became very angry from what the man said. He called his agents and .ordered them to imprison his vizier

,The vizier, who did not expect such an attitude, kneeled on his knees and said

"?Oh great caliph, what has been my crime that you order my imprisonment"

The caliph answered with great fury, "what greater crime than the fact that you are my vizier and yet at the top of your report paper is a writing which is the motto and "!?belief of the Christians

The wretched vizier asked for permission and said, "My lord! This is not my crime. My people have bought this paper from the bazaar. All the papers sold in Damascus ".bazaar have this sign on them. I am a Muslim. I haven't committed a crime

* * *

In reality what the vizier said was true. At that time, only the Egyptian Christians produced paper and the Egyptian Christians followed the Roman Christians and stamped a special sign at the top of the papers. These

papers were sent to all the Islamic cities. Therefore, all the papers, which were in the .hands of the Muslim people, bore the Christian sign on them

.When Abdul Malek found out about it, he became thoughtful

He did not favor the circulation of a paper in his country, which had the sign of a foreign country stamped on it. Therefore, he wrote a letter to the governor of Egypt and asked him to stop the paper manufacturers from stamping the Christian sign on the papers. In addition, he ordered them to stamp 'There is no God but Allah' on top of the papers. With his order all papers with Christian signs were collected and they .'were replaced with papers which bore the sentence, 'There is no God but Allah

The Muslims were very happy with this replacement. On the other hand, Abdul Malek who knew that the people do not like him and are in distress from his oppressions, .introduced himself as a great caliph

Little by little, the new papers were seen everywhere. These papers had even found their way to the Roman court. The Roman emperor was a Christian who had great .power. He always sent money for the Christians in Egypt who had paper factories

The Roman emperor became very miserable when he realized that they had .replaced the Christian sign on the papers

:He sent a letter to Abdul Malek. As follows

The caliphs before you all used the papers that had the Christian sign on them. This sign has been at the top of the papers for tens of years. You better proceed like your fathers and order the removal of 'there is no God but Allah' from the papers and .stamp back the previous sign at the top of all papers

.The emperor sent many gifts with the letter to Abdul Malek

* * *

The emperor's messenger reached Abdul Malek's palace with the letter and priceless gifts. Abdul Malek read the letter. Then he told the emperor's messenger, "The letter which you have brought has no answer. Take the gifts and go back. I will not accept ".these gifts

The emperor's messenger took the gifts and returned to Rome. He explained everything to the emperor. The emperor wrote another letter for Abdul Malek. He again asked him to put back the Christian sign on the papers and omit 'there is only one God'. The emperor sent the letter with another messenger to Abdul Malek and .doubled the gifts

.Again, Abdul Malek returned the gifts and left the letter without an answer

.The emperor's messenger took the gifts and went back to Rome

Abdul Malek knew that the Roman emperor was powerful. For this reason, he did not .want to annoy him. But he couldn't change his decision

The people of Damascus had all found out about the subject. If he had given in to .what the Roman emperor had said, he would have disgraced himself

For the third time, the Roman emperor sent even more gifts for Abdul Malek, but this time he included a threatening letter for the caliph. He had written in his letter as :follows

I sent you gifts and friendly letters twice; but you refused to answer me and" returned my gifts. This time I have sent you more valuable gifts. You better accept them

and order the removal of 'there is no god but Allah' and stamp the Christian sign like before on the papers. In this way our friendly relationship will stay as firm as before. If you do not do this, I will order the stamping of insulting sentences towards your prophet on gold and silver coins. You know that the people of your country trade with Roman coins. Then, you shall see that the Muslim people of your land will be forced to ".trade with coins that insult their prophet

The third letter of the Roman emperor frustrated Abdul Malek. He had never thought of the Roman coins. The Roman coins were the currency of that time. All the people traded with them. A few of those coins could be found in the pockets, pouches, houses and shops of everyone. If the Roman emperor stuck to his words and ordered the stamping of insulting words towards the prophet, the Muslims would revolt. Every one needed coins to buy and sell. Moreover, there was no one who knew how to make .coins with gold and silver to free the people from trading with Roman coins

Abdul Malek was really helpless and didn't know what to do. If he allowed the stamping of the Christian signs on the papers, he would lose his influence and position. And if he didn't allow it, coins would circle in the market that was an even .greater danger for his power and ruling

This time he didn't sent back the emperor messenger straight away. He decided to gather his counselors and nobles, so that they could come to a decent conclusion and .answer the emperor

The noblemen of Damascus and the counselors of the palace circled around the .Caliph

Abdul Malek set forth his problem but no one could come to a reasonable solution. Their meetings were

held for a few days, but it was all useless. On the next day one of the nobles stepped forward fearfully. He politely turned to Abdul Malek and said, "I know someone who is sure to have a solution to your problem. You already now him but I'm not sure if you "?would like to consult him or not

.Who is he?" Abdul Malek asked"

.He is Imam Mohammad Baqir" the man replied"

A heavy silent shadowed the meeting. Everyone knew that Abdul Malek was an .(.enemy of Imam Mohammad Baqir (p.b.u.h

Everyone knew Imam Mohammad Baqir. They all knew that Imam Mohammad Baqir was an intellectual and that's why he was called 'Baqir', meaning the splitter of knowledge. They were sure that the Imam knew very well the solution to their .problem

Abdul Malek started to think deeply. He, too, was sure that Imam Mohammad Baqir knew what to do. But seeking help from him was very hard for the caliph. He had frequently asked the governor of Medina to keep an eye on Imam Mohammad Baqir .and his followers

After some moments, Abdul Malek wrote a letter to the governor of Medina and .asked him to send Imam Mohammad Baqir to Damascus with honor and respect

A few days later, Imam Mohammad Baqir entered Damascus while facing the .welcome of the people. Imam knew about the problem

Abdul Malek went to meet the Imam at a suitable time and informed him of the situation. After hearing about it, Imam Mohammad Baqir replied, "the emperor's threat will not be carried out! Be sure that God will not give him the chance to make coins that are insulting towards the prophet and distribute them among the people. The real solution to this problem is easy too. Gather the

".artisans of Damascus so I could teach them how to make coins

Soon after, all of the artisans of Damascus circled around Imam Mohammad Baqir. Imam taught them making of coin which they needed. Also he determined the weight, size, and value of the coins and organized a plan to make three kinds of coins. Imam Mohammad Baqir told them to write the Surah At-Towhid on one side; and the name .of the prophet of Islam on the other side

The order of Imam was quickly sent to other towns either. The people gave their Roman coins to the governors and received Islamic coins instead. On the coins was the place and date of the town they were made in. Trading with Roman coins was prohibited. From then on the Islamic coins became the validate coins of trade in the .vast Muslim territory

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THE LAST WORDS

For many years I had been serving in the house of Imam Ja'far Sadegh, and many acted as a companion of Umma Hamidah, consort of Imam. I had shared the joys and sorrows of that noble family. In many matters it was I who made a decision. I always managed the affairs of the house quietly. But on that day I felt different. I had lost my usual calmness, and I found it hard to make a decision. I occupied myself with this and .that, and kept on looking at the door, waiting for the relatives of the Imam to arrive

On that day the call for the evening prayer has not been performed when Umm Hamidah hurriedly came out of the room and said: "Salama, send someone round to fetch all the relatives of the Imam here. The Imam has ordered that they should all ".gather here. He wants to divulge his last words to his relatives

I realized from Umm Hamidah's words that, it was the last night of Imam Sadiq. A great sorrow sat on my heart. I wished to leave the Imam's consort in those critical moments not even to stay one moment away from the Imam. But I had to carry out the Imam's order and find those persons to assemble in his house. I assigned a few people to fetch the relatives of the Imam. They left quickly and I returned to the beside of the Imam and sat by Umma Hamidah. Imam Sadiq was lying down in bed. Some days before, the Imam had been poisoned by the order of Mansur, the caliph of the time. The effect of the poison gradually appeared, and now the Imam was confined to bed. Mansur was an enemy of the Imam. He had many times plotted against the life of the Imam, but he had failed in every case. However, this time Mansur's plan had been carried out, and the Imam was poisoned. It was painful for me, to see his weakened and suffering face. Umm Hamidah was gazing at that pale and suffering

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face while quietly shedding tears. The Imam's lips were moving as if he wanted to say something. I thought that he intended to utter his last words in the presence of his !relatives, but none of them had yet arrived. O' God! Let him not die before their arrival

Suddenly I thought of Abu Nasr who was one of the loyal friends of the Imam. He was one of those who always noted down the words of Imam and repeated them for others. I thought it advisable that Abu Nasr, too, should be present at the last moments of Imam's life, and hear his last words. He would be the only person who could help the Imam Sadiq. No one was in the house, for, I had sent away everyone to find the Imam's relatives. I didn't know what to do. Abu Nasr's house was very far away. I had to seek him out myself but I feared that the Imam would be dead by the .time I returned, and I would miss being by his side during his last moments

I was completely perplexed, when I heard a knock on the door. I hurried to the door and found there a pupil of the Imam who had come to see how he was. I told him that the Imam was not well, and that night was probably his last night. He sat down by the .door and began to weeping

He used to visit the Imam every day. I explained my problem to him, and he rose and ".said: "You had better stay with Umma Hamidah. I will go to find Abu Nasr

I thanked God, and thanked him; and returned to the room. The Imam was still slept. Umma Hamidah was sitting by his beside and weeping. He looked very pale and thin; .He was sixty- five years old, I had never seen him so pale and thin

Soon afterwards some of his relatives arrived one by one, but not all of them. Each one, on entering, saluted

.and sat by the Imam's bed. Everyone gazed in silence at his face

Suddenly he slowly opened his eyes. Umma Hamidah moved slightly and put her face closer to the Imam. He turned his head round with some difficulty and looked at those who were present, maybe to see if all had come, but they had not. Others were expected to arrive. The Imam closed his eyes again. One of those present began to cry. Imam Sadiq again opened his eyes and everyone looked at him. He smiled affectionately and said: "Why do you cry?" The man answered: "Why should I not? "?May God destroy the enemies of Islam! Could I see you in this condition and not cry

The Imam remained silent for a moment and then said: "No! Don't cry! Whatever happens to a believer is good, and even if all his limbs are cut off, it is good for him, or ".if he owns everything on the earth, again it is good for him

What fine words! O' God! Let not these words be his last! For, not all his relatives are here yet. He closed his eyes again for some moments: and then said: "Remember to ".give my cousin Hasan Ibn Ali seventy coins of my money

I felt as if the whole room was turning round and round. I almost collapsed. I knew Hasan Ibn Ali well. He was an enemy of the Imam. I could bear it no more and said: "He is your enemy. He is the man who attacked you with a dagger to kill you. Do you "?want to give him some of your money

The Imam smiled faintly and said: "God loves those who help their relations. Do you "?not want to be one of those who are spoken well of by God

Oh! How noble Imam Sadiq was! At that moment the door opened and two others entered. One of them was

a relative of the Imam. The other one was the same pupil of the Imam who had gone to find Abu Nasr. I went quickly to him and asked about Abu Nasr. He answered: "Abu ".Nasr was not at home. I sent a member of his family to find and send him here

I began to think and wish that Abu Nasr would arrive soon. I wished that he were there to write down the words of the Imam. The relatives continued to arrive one by one. Now almost everybody was there, sitting round the Imam's bed, and weeping .quietly, and waiting to hear his last words

These were painful moments, and they passed unpleasantly. Once more the Imam opened his eyes and shifted himself a little in bed. Then he looked round at everyone, remained silent for a moment and said: "He who pays no attention to daily ritual ".prayers and takes them lightly, can not benefit from our intercession

I did not know then whether those were the last words of the Imam. He always advised us to take the daily ritual prayers and perform them on time. Now in his last moment of life he was again making the same recommendation, saying that on the Day of Resurrection he would not help those who pay no attention to the heart-rending cry of Umma Hamidah broke the thread of my thoughts. The Imam had passed away. Everyone thinking of the last words of the Imam, recommending .everyone to pay attention to the daily ritual prayers

* * *

The corpse of the Imam was carried by his relatives and friends to the Baghi'e cemetery, and buried by the tombs of his ancestors Imam Hasan, Imam Sajjad

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and Imam Baqir. That night was the ۲۵ of the Lunar month of Shawwal, of the year ۱۴۸ .after Hejrat

Imam Mousa Kazim, son of Imam Sadigh ordered a lamp to be lit in the room where .his father lived every night

The relatives and followers of the Imam returned, and Abu Nasr, too, arrived in a confused state of mind and weeping. He went to Umma Hamidah and offered his condolences. Umma Hamidah said in answer: "Alas you were not present at the Imam's death! I wish you had come sooner. The last words recommended the Muslims to pay attention to the daily ritual prayers, namely something which he had ".repeatedly emphasized during the thirty- four years of his imamate

The house was silent, and only the sound of lamentation of the relatives of the Imam .could be heard. There was no other light but the one which had been lit in his room

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THE SECOND GROWTH

Ibrahim stood up after performing his night prayer. He was feeling very tired and a few hours of sleep had not yet removed his fatigue. He walked towards the window, put his head out and looked at the sky, thinking to himself: "Is it time for morning "?prayer

It was a clear and starry sky. He gazed at the stars and watched the moon that was moving slowly, as if looking after the baby stars. The moon had been telling stories for the stars all night, so that they could go to sleep. How close the stars seemed to him! He said to himself. "If Hossain were awake, he would think that he could climb a very ".tall ladder and pick one of the stars for himself

.He laughed at this idea, and a slight smile remained on his lips

After performing his morning prayer he went back to his bed, arguing with himself whether he should lie down again or not. He was very tired and felt sleepy. But he had much work to do on his farm which needed taking care of. He remembered how much hard labor he had done on the farm. He had cultivated a wide and dry land outside .Jawania, of the city of Medina

He had worked on it round the clock for months, assisted by the members of his family and a few other workers he had hired to turn that arid land into a cultivated farm. Now the corn ears moved with every gentle breeze, filling the heart of his family with hope; the hope of the time of reaping and the time when they could settle their .debts and use the rest of the crop for their livelihood

He thought: "I will certainly take some of the corn to Imam Mussa Kazem (p.b.u.h.) to ".be divided amongst the poor

He was pleased with this idea. His eyelids felt heavier every moment, but the thought of the corn ears

and the unfinished work in the farm did not let him go back to sleep. He shook himself a little and opened his eyes, and said to himself: "I must get up and go to the farm to ".attend the crop

He was about to stand up that there came a sudden knock on the door. Before he could rise, his wife and son had reached the door. A voice behind the door kept on calling him with a panting breath, saying: "Ibrahim! Where are you, Ibrahim? All your property is gone! Hurry up! Locusts have swarmed upon your field. May be you can "!save the rest of your crop

It was one of his workers. He had run a long way. He uttered his words with much anxiety and let himself sit on the ground. Ibrahim leapt out of the bed, picked a large handkerchief, put on his shoes, carried a spade on his shoulder and ran towards the farm. The sun was just beginning to rise, that the man was getting quite out of breath, "!saying to himself: "O God! Help me

It was too late when Ibrahim reached the farm. He had lost every thing. The swarm of locusts was disappearing like a black cloud, and not even one ear of his crop was left. He dropped insensible by his now locust- striken field and looked towards the sky. Then he covered his face with his hands and plunged into thought, saying: "O God! I have lost the fruits of my labors, and every thing I had has, been destroyed. What can I say to people now? How can I pay my debts? Where can I get a living to support my "?family

He was shocked with grief, and could hardly breathe. The rest of the family arrived soon, looking worried and distressed. His wife began to comfort him with the following words, "There is nothing to be done. It is a mishap that has happened. But God is ".Compassionate and our subsistence is in His hand

Ibrahim was still. His wife's words gave him some hope. She was right and one should vest hope in God only. His legs didn't have the strength to stand up. His wife sat by .him

Minutes and hours passed in silence and grief until noon came. The call for prayer could be heard from the Mosque. Ibrahim stood up and headed for the mosque. Upon arriving, he performed ablution and stood up to pray. He finished his prayer, but felt uneasy at having nothing to do. So, he set off for home. The sun was almost in the middle of the sky. He was still thinking of his crop, the crop which had grown with his labor and with the aid of water and sunshine, and was now destroyed with the raid of .locusts

* * *

Several days passed, and although a long time had gone since the raid of the locusts upon his farm he continued to visit it every day. He spent the whole day in that cropless field, and returned home in the evenings. A little while later he would lay down in bed, and listen to the murmur of the moon telling story for the stars. He was thinking to himself: "The stars are golden, and my crop, too, was turning golden." He remembered how hard he had pulled out the weeds. "I won't let you suck the blood of .my baby corns." He would say

.Smiling at the thoughts and the hard work he had done, little by little he fell asleep

One morning, as usual he was sitting by his farm when he saw some horsemen in the distance coming towards him. He thought: "They must be coming in this direction, for; .there is no other place to go around here

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He sheltered his eyes with his hand to see if he could recognize them. When they came nearer Ibrahim recognized them. He got up to his feet and ran towards them, saying: "My lord!"

He would not believe that the Imam was visiting him. Yes, it was Imam Mussa Kazem and his friends who had come to see him.

Ibrahim ran to the Imam. He was so happy that he felt as if he were flying. The Imam dismounted, stroke Ibrahim's head, embraced him and asked how he was. Ibrahim wiped his tears of joy, and answered: "I am very well, O Imam!"

The Imam asked about the man's family, and he answered that all of them were fine. Imam remained silent and walked towards the farm.

Imam asked about his job, he bent his head and pointed to the field. Again Imam remained silent for a few moments and pressed Ibrahim's hand which he still held, saying: "Tell me, Ibrahim! How much have you borrowed, and how much profit have been lost?"

Again Ibrahim bent his head, and then raised it, saying: "It amounts to two hundred and fifty Dirhams worth which was destroyed as a result of the locusts raid. The dry land which I turned into a farm by hard work is completely ruined. Now I am not even able to repay my debts. Locusts have caused my ruin. They have left me misery instead of corn."

Imam Kazem put his hand in his pocket and took out a bag, and offered two hundred and fifty Dirhams to Ibrahim. Ibrahim, hesitated for some moments and felt as if he was nailed to the ground. He remembered the words of his wife saying: "God is kind, and our subsistence is in His Hand."

At last he took the bag and thanked Imam. Imam Kazem took hold of the rein of his horse and together with his companions began to walk towards the farm. It was near .noon and the sun was high in the middle of the sky

Ibrahim looked at the farm for a moment and in his imagination he saw ears of corn, slowly growing reaching higher and higher, each one carrying a fully rich ear, while the breeze gently moving them about. Ibrahim rubbed his eyes to come out of his fanciful dream. He thought that he was either asleep, or that he had gone crazy or fallen into day- dreaming. But it was not a dream. The second growth of the corns was a fact and reality. The sun of Imam Kazem's blissful Imamate and guardianship had shone on his corns making them grow once more. His heart was filled with vast joy. He looked the farm over again. The call for the noon prayer could be heard. Imam and his companions were setting off for the city. Ibrahim was so excited and confounded that he did not notice the Imam and his companions leaving for the city. He began to .run after them

That night was so clear, so calm and full of stars. Ibrahim was thinking of the moon and the stars. He smiled, and thought that the moon was telling a fresh story for his .stars. The story of the second growth of his crop

All people of the city, too, heard about the story. Everyone felt happy. Whenever they saw Ibrahim, they saluted him and begged him to tell them the event of the second growth of the crops. He, too, told the story from the beginning to the end; like the .moon

Samera was originally composed of Sorre-Man-Ray, meaning: "He who saw, (۱
".became glad

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۱) The narrator's name is Ali Bin – Khaled.

۲) Muhammad Bin – Abdul- Malek Zayyat was a minister to three of the Abbassid caliphs.

۳) At this time Mo'etassam was caliph.

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DE\'BEL\'S SECRET

No one could guess what De'bel was thinking about when he stared at a far away distance. Or for what reason his black, clear eyes filled with tears now and then.

Although De'bel was returning with a large caravan from Marve to Medina, however he did not sense the presence of the travelers around himself. Again and again, De'bel remembered the time which he had stood before Imam Reza and had read one of his poems for him. That poem was about the cruelties and oppressions which the Umayyad and Abbasid dynasties had carried out against the household of the Prophet (peace be upon them).

He had recited for Imam Reza,

I see their spoils,

Divided among others,

And their hands,

Empty of their own spoils.

With this poem, Imam Reza had started to cry and had said, "Oh De'bel! You have said the truth."

When De'bel remembered the tears of the Imam, his heart filled with grief and tears rolled down his face and he quietly said,

"His hands are empty of their own spoils."

At this moment the caravan stopped to rest next to a river. De'bel sat next to a rock and stared at the water. Once again he recalled everything from his arrival in Marve, meeting with Imam Reza, and reciting poems for him.

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A smile appeared on his face when he remembered how Imam Reza had liked his .poem and that he had given one of his garments to him

Imam Reza had given one of his garments to De'bel after hearing the poem and had ".said, "With this blessed garment you shall be protected from any harm

De'bel was in his own thoughts when he suddenly heard screams from the caravan ,people

-"!Bandits! Bandits"

.Alarmed, De'bel looked towards where the bandits were coming from

The bandits had covered their faces and were quickly getting closer. De'bel was too old and tired to run away, therefore he made no movement and sat on the same rock. .It was as if nothing had happened at all

The people of the caravan were still screaming and running for a refuge in every direction. When the bandits reached the caravan, they screamed with joy and plundered what ever they saw. The sound of crying and screaming was heard from .every direction

Suddenly De'bel remembered the garment which was the gift of Imam Reza. The garment was among his belongings and he did not want to lose it. For this reason, he went towards the caravan, to stop them, in any possible way, from getting their hands .on the garment

The happy sound of the bandits and the screams of the travelers were mingled together in a way that distressed De'bel greatly. He wanted to cry out, "Stop this "?plundering! Do you know what you're doing

.But he knew that the only one to hear his voice would be himself

Suddenly, as he was walking towards the caravan tired and terrified, he heard a voice ,singing

,I see their spoils

,Divided among others

,And their hands

.Empty of their own spoils

It was, as if, his heart was beating a thousand times faster than before. He was trembling all over, and his hands were shaking. The voice sang again,

,I see their spoils

...Divided among others

"?Who is singing? Where is it coming from"

,And their hands

...Empty of their own spoils

De'bel sat on the ground hopeless and desperately said, "for God's sake, who is singing?"

,As he was kneeling on the ground he saw one of the bandits singing happily

,I see their spoils

...Divided among others

"!De'bel got up with great effort and brought himself to him; "Wait! Wait

But the Bandit was so overwhelmed of the spoils he had gained that he was deaf to any voice. De'bel ran after him with more strength and said," Wait, for God's sake, wait!"

The bandit stopped. De'bel got closer to him, looked him in the eyes and asked, "Tell me, who has composed the poem you were singing?"

The bandit looked at him in surprise and asked, "what is the use of knowing the answer to this question?"

De'bel answered pleadingly," I have a reason. Please tell me who the poet of this poem is?"

The Bandit who saw De'bel asking desperately answered him involuntarily, "De'bel bin Ali Khozaei, he is the best poet of the Prophet's Household (peace be upon them).

With hearing these words, De'bel fell to the ground and sat where he was. The man still looked at him, bewildered. De'bel spoke with a voice which seemed to come from deep down inside him, "I am De'bel, I am De'bel bin Ali Khozaei!"

He said this and again he remembered the moment which he had recited this poem in the presence of Imam Reza.

The man gazed at him for a moment. Then suddenly, he started to run and brought himself to the leader of the Bandits. As De'bel was sitting down, little by little the sound of the screams and cries disappeared. After some moments De'bel felt a shadow next to himself. Then someone said, " Hey you, why have you claimed falsely?"

De'bel did not answer and the leader of the bandits said with anger, "Why have you claimed to be De'bel Khozaei?"

De'bel said, "I am De'bel. You can go and ask from the other travelers."

The leader of the Bandits looked at the others and said, "We will do that."

The travelers, who had found out that something new had come up, gathered up in a corner. The leader of the Bandits got closer to them and looked them in the eye one by one. Finally he asked one of the men, "Do you know the name of that man?"

The man answered with a trembling voice, "we called him De'bel and he answered ".us

"?The leader went close to an old woman and asked, "Do you know who that man is

"...The woman answered, "We called him

The leader of the bandits screamed, "Enough. Whoever I ask, gives me the same answer; how do I know that you are telling the truth. Perhaps you have all agreed to ".support the old man

Then he became quiet and looked around himself. Everyone looked at him with fear .and terror. Only De'bel's look was on the ground

Suddenly the leader's eyes fell upon a little girl. He laughed happily and said, "The truth must be heard from the child." Then he got closer to the little girl and in order to influence her with his kindness asked her in a calm, soft voice," that man over there, "?the one which is sitting on the ground, what is his name

.The girl answered, "We called him De'bel," and hid herself behind her mother's back

.And he answered you for sure," added the leader of the bandits"

Hearing this, the bandits all started to laugh. Their leader laughed too. Then he suddenly became serious and murmured, "it's not possible not to believe anymore. ".So, he is De'bel. De'bel; the famous poet of the household of the holy Prophet

Saying this he went towards De'bel. De'bel was still sitting where he was. He lifted him from the ground. In the movements of the leader was such kindness and sympathy .that the travelers all looked at each other with astonishment

".The leader said, "De'bel, say the rest of the poem

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.And De'bel recited with an extremely sad voice, the rest of his poem

After reciting the poem, De'bel did not know what happened. When he came to himself the bandits had all gone away and had returned the belongings of the .travelers to their owners

The people of the caravan were telling each other happily and with surprise, "It is amazing. It is really amazing for a group of bandits to keep the honor of a poet of the ".Prophet's household in such a way

However, De'bel was not thinking about these things. To him the most important thing was the garment which he had got from Imam Reza. That's why he ran toward his belongings. And when he saw the garment was untouched, he sighed in relief and smelled it. At that moment, once again he recalled the face of Imam Reza who was ".saying, "With this blessed garment you shall be protected from any harm

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It was early morning and I could sense the fresh air of the previous night moving around the house. I looked at the single tall palm tree in the middle of the yard. Being heavy hearted, I wanted to sit next to the tree for a while. Moments later, I heard my mother coughing from inside the house. She had been sick for a few days and needed my nursing. I went back to the room and held a bowl of water to her lips. She drank a bit and felt better. I decided to go to the bazaar and buy some milk for her. I went back to yard. A cool breeze was blowing slowly and moved the palm leaves playfully. I .moved away from this scene against my will, and stepped out of the house

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The town of Samera was full of fruit orchards. The earth of the alleys smelled of flowers. Tree branches stooped over the walls and greeted the pedestrians. You could see a beautiful clean stream from anywhere you passed. Anyone who walked in .the town was overwhelmed from these beautiful scenes

One by one, I left behind different shops until I came across the milk shop. When the milkman saw me, he said with a loud voice, "Hello, the son of Khaled! You haven't "!been around for a few days

I told him that I had stayed at home for a few days because of my mother's illness. "?Surprised, he asked, "So, you don't know about what's been going around in town

".No," I answered, "if you have any news tell me about it"

He brought his face close and said, "They have brought a prisoner to town yesterday. They say he has

"...claimed to be a prophet. He is an old man from Damascus

I stepped away aimlessly and without direction. The milkman cried with surprise, "?"Where are you going Ali-bin-khaled

I didn't answer back. I was thinking with myself, how was it possible for a person to call himself a prophet when it was two hundred years after the prophethood of Prophet Mohammad, (peace be upon him and his household), and all the Muslims knew him as the last prophet. The only answer was that perhaps the old man was !crazy

When I came to myself, I had the tall strong walls of the prison in front of me. I have forgotten to tell you that the town of Samera with all its beauty, was a military town and soldiers and government officials could be seen everywhere. One of the biggest suburbs of the town was called, 'Askar' and the town's prison was placed in that suburb. I looked around. The towers of the prison seemed taller than before, and its walls stronger and taller than ever. I was sorry for not being a bird to fly over the .walls

Suddenly I remembered one of my old friends. He was my childhood playmate and later he worked in the town prison. I hadn't seen him for years and had no news from him. I felt a power inside me. I went forward and asked the guards about my friend. One of the guards knew him but said, "It is now a year that he has moved to Baghdad ".and now he is one of the Caliph's bodyguards

It was a good opportunity. I used my friendship and asked that guard to take me to that old man. First, he would not accept but after my insistence, he gave in. I thanked him happily and promised him to return his kindness some day. Then I looked at the .sky and thanked God in my heart

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.I saw the sun peeping from behind the clouds and smiling

* * *

The prison was dark and damp. We went through narrow passages that had low ceilings and mud-built walls. If it were not for the light of the torches, we could have hardly seen in front of our steps. The sound of crying, moaning, and chains, could be heard through out the prison. Fear was felt from every corner. After putting behind some passages, we came to an old wooden door. A guard with lots of keys belted on his waist, put a key to the lock, and hit against the door with his leg. The door opened with a shrieking sound. The light of the torch, which was in the hand of one of the .guards shone on the old man's face

.It was he; the one whom they said had claimed to be a prophet

I took the torch from the guard and went down the stairs. I stepped closer to him. His hair and beard were gray and he sat in a corner. Next to him was nothing but a pot of water and a clay bowl. He opened his eyelids and in one look studied me from top to bottom. My heart trembled. I sat next to him quietly. A few minutes passed in silence. Although I could hardly speak, I asked him, "I have heard from people that you know "?yourself to be a prophet, is this true

The old man slowly took his eyes off me and fixed them on the ground. He sighed and ".said, "Pity that people are simple-minded and easy believers

I could feel grief and sorrow in his voice. I asked about him and his name. He said that he was from

Damascus and that he had spent his life in the way of worshipping God. He talked with .serenity and dignity

I asked about his imprisonment. He did not answer. I asked again. He shook his head ,in disappointment and said

We have different beliefs, so how can you understand the truth of the story I talk" "?about

"?I smartly answered, "Don't you want to put me on the same side as yourself

He thought in silence for a while and then said, "The story started in a shrine in Damascus. It was for some time that I prayed and worshiped God there. One day, when I had raised my hands to God, a voice called me and said, "Rise!" I turned towards the sound. I saw a well-dressed man in front of myself who had a blessed face. I got up involuntarily and followed behind him. Only a few moments had passed that he stopped in front of a mosque with tall minarets. He turned towards me and "?said, "Do you know this mosque

Yes," I answered. "This is the Kuffa Mosque." ...after praying we left that mosque." We had not taken many steps, when I found myself facing the Mosque of the Prophet in Medina. We prayed there too, and started again. We walked a bit further and I suddenly saw myself in Mecca, next to Ka'ba. After circling the Ka'ba, we walked on again. This time I found myself in Damascus; the same place I had been before this mysterious trip. At this moment, that person disappeared from my eyes and left me alone with a sea of wonder. A year passed on until one night, for the second time, the same story and the same trip was repeated, with the difference that this time, I begged him for God's sake to tell his name. Do you know who he was? He was Imam "!Javad –peace be upon Him- the ninth Imam of us Shi'as

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When I found out that he is a follower of Imam Javad, I was even more surprised. How could it be possible for a person to be a Muslim, count himself as a follower of the Imams, and yet claim to be a prophet? Without hesitation, I asked the old man, "What "?does this story has to do with claiming to be a prophet

The old man turned his face towards me and stared into my eyes. Then with a trembling voice said, "I swear that I have never called myself a prophet. All these are lies. My only mistake was that I told this incident for my friends and family and they retold it for others, till the news reached Abdul Malek. He ordered that I be brought to .your town and be imprisoned, and accused me of prophethood

I trembled all over when I heard the name, Abdul Malek. Suddenly everything seemed dark to me. I went deep in thoughts. He was the vizier to the Abbasid caliph 'Mo'tasem'; a stonehearted vicious man who did not know friend from foe and had mercy on no one. By his order, they had made a furnace with small and large nails sticking out of its walls. They would throw his enemies in the burning furnace, burning them alive. Tears filled in my eyes and I felt sorry for the old man. I thought with myself that perhaps they had given false news to the vizier about this old man. What if a little mistake or lie, caused great trouble for him? As I was leaving him alone in the ".darkness, I said, "I will do all I can, to save your life

From the split between the wall and the closing rusty door, I saw the old man greeting .me with a smiling face. I will never forget the look on his face

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At home, I sadly sat in a corner with my hands circled around my knees. My mother woke up coughing. Her coughs reminded me that I was supposed to buy milk in the morning, but the excitement of seeing the old man had made me forget. I told the story to my mother. She tried to calm me down and said, "The old man's words cannot be trusted. If he is telling the truth, God will show a way for his freedom. If he is lying, ".then better that he stays where he is

For me who had spoken with the old man and still felt his voice in my ears, it was hard to think him crazy or a liar. On the other hand, I could not just sit down and see the old man's life ending. I recalled the happenings of the day a few times. Suddenly, I remembered what one of the agents had said about my friend being a special guard of the caliph. It was better to ask him to inform the vizier about the old man. I took a .pen and paper with excitement, and wrote everything to him

* * *

Days went on from that event. My mother's health was improving. So I could spend more time outside the house. Every day when I came home, I asked mother, "Has "?there been a letter or a message

"!And mother's answer would be "no

During this time, I was worried about the old man who was awaiting his death, on one hand and on the other hand, I was searching for a way to find out whether the old man was telling the truth. Finding the truth was more important to me than the old man's destiny, because if he had told the truth, then I had to believe in the Imamate .of Hazrate Javad, and be on the same opinion of the Shi'as

Because what he had said is possible only through Imam and a successor of the .Prophet

Finally, one morning, I heard a few knocks on the door of the house. I got up and opened the door. In front of me, stood a young man with his horse's bridle in his hands. He looked very tired, and his face and clothes were covered in dust. He greeted me and said, "I come from Baghdad, I have brought a letter for you." I happily received the letter from him, and opened it quickly while saying goodbye. I was shocked when I saw what was written in the letter. The Caliph's vizier, Mohammad-ibn-Abdul Malek had written in his own handwriting, "Ask the same person who takes the old man from Damascus to Medina and Mecca, and then ".returns him to come and free him from our prisons

What the Vizier meant by 'the same person' was Imam Javad. I wiped the cold sweet, which had settled on my forehead. I didn't know what I had to say. I gazed at the date palm tree in the middle of the yard. It was bent towards the ground and it did not move. He too, seemed sad and gloomy. It was clear from the vizier's answer that they had imprisoned the old man because of their hatred towards the leader of the Shi'as, and claims of prophet hood were only excuses. The Caliph and his vizier feared that if the people heard the story of the old man they become believers of Imam Javad - peace be upon him. That was why they had sent the old man to prison. I spent one or two ways looking for a solution. But I came to no answer. It was as if the old man had .to stay in jail until he was punished

Finally, I decided to give the old man another visit to inform him about the Vizier's answer. As I was going, I remembered those fearful scenes; narrow passages, small

dark rooms, chains clattering, prisoners moaning, and the sad old man, sitting in the .prison all alone

From a distance, I saw many soldiers running from one place to another. I went closer. They were all angry and distressed. I was amazed. I saw two guards running towards their commander, saying, "We searched every where...there is no trace of "!him

There was a great crowd around the great gate of the prison. I saw some guards "?talking in a corner. I went forward and asked, "What's happened

".One of them moved his hands like two wings and said, "It's as if he has flown away

"!The other guard said, "Maybe he has gone into the ground; like a drop of water

.Who are you talking about?" I asked, surprised"

That old man from Damascus, who was jailed here. No one has seen how he has got" ".out of the prison

I was happy all over. I wanted to scream and thank God. Everything was clear for me. Imam Javad had come to help the old man. And this time too, he had taken him from one place to another, just the old man had said. But this time, the old man wasn't saved alone; I considered myself saved too. Imam Javad had helped me too and he had flown me from the land of darkness to the sky of light and guidance. Now, I knew that He is the Imam and successor of the Prophet of God. I felt very light. I ran as fast .as I could towards home to make mother happy too

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IN THOSE PALACES

The whole city was plunged into darkness. The sun had poured down its fire on the life of the city throughout the day, and was now sleeping quietly behind the mountain. The air no longer held the burning heat of the day. The people of Samera were resting .at home after a tiring day of work

Six armed agents were passing quietly and on foot through the narrow and silent streets of the city. Their leader, who was taller and bigger than the others, walked among the other five. One of them, who had covered his face with a cloth pulled it up and with a laugh which was mixed with fear and excitement, said: "We must surprise ".him in such a way that he finds no chance to hide the weapons and letters

Another agent who walked next to the leader, glanced at him and said: "Sir.... If it is not too presumptuous, why has Mutawakil, the caliph, allowed this man, who is "....against the government, to stay alive for so long? If God forbid

The leader interrupted him with a sharp look and said: "You fool! It is too soon for us "!to know why his holyship Mutawakil acts as he does

".....You mean.... You mean that" -

Yes.... AbulHasan is respected by the people. He can not easily be eliminated. This is" - ".why his holiness Mutawakil has sent us to arrest him at this time of night

Another agent, fastening a red shawl round his waist, said: "From the beginning, too, the banishment of Abul Hasan from Medina was due to the same reason. He is deeply loved by the people of Mecca and Medina.... It is really hard to get rid of such a "!person

The leader of the agents, seeming to remember some thing, suddenly grumbled: "That is enough .... Say

no more..... We may be attacked in this darkness from behind the palms or from on "!the roofs! Put some space between yourselves in walking. Be quick

The agents pressed their swords and sticks in their hands and passed through several empty streets until they reached a house. The five agents made a ring around their :leader. They listened utterly to what he said

Quiet! Listen carefully! When I give the signal, you three must rush into the house at" - once from above the wall. You other two and I will keep watch outside so that if ".anyone wants to escape, we will kill him

"?Sir! Would three of us be enough for this important task" -

Oh, you coward! Three men to arrest one man, and yet you say.... Nonsense! Be" - "!quick

The leader fastened his head cover, and stroked the hilt of his sword. He and the other two besieged the house. The faint lights of the houses were being extinguished .one by one. Silence had thrown its shadow over the city in the hours before sunset

A few moments later the leader gave a signal by splitting the air with the downward stroke of his sword. All at once three dark shapes climbed the wall, and leapt down into the yard of the house. The three of them, sword in hand, stood back to back, and slowly circling round, began to search the space around them. It was all dark except a small room from which a yellowish light emerged. Silence reined everywhere except .in the same room from which a soft murmur could be heard

On hearing this sound the three agents dropped their hands from the hilt of their swords and looked at each other in surprise, as if they did not know what to do. At last one of them whispered cautiously: "You keep watch for every movement. I will let the ".others in

Then he fastened his sword, and taking stealthy half- steps, opened the door of the house and went out. A moment later the sound of steps echoed in the yard, and the leader, looking excited and satisfied, walked ahead of the other two. He made a signal .and then led the way for the others and they rushed into the room

There a man, with a scarf a round his head and dressed in a coarse garment, was sitting on a floor covered with sand, facing the Qiblah and quietly reciting the Quran. He was neither old, nor young. He had a white and reddish face and large eyebrows. As he was murmuring the verses, tears flowed down his bony cheeks from his big eyes. Although three armed agents were standing above him, he calmly continued his recitation of the Quranic verses in the same sitting position, the verses which spoke of .the painful of the wicked and the happy future of the good

The leader of the agents wondered what to do. Two of them went in shame to the window, and one of them gazed at the blue and starry sky with his dull and perplexed .eyes. The other one took off his head cover, and squatted on the floor

When the leader saw these things, he swallowed his yell and angrily ran towards the :two agents, and kicked the knee of the one who was sitting and said

- "?You fool! What are you doing? Have you forgotten where you are"

- .Both agents suddenly came to themselves and moved away from the window

- When the men who was reciting the Quran, finished his recitation, he quietly turned his head and looked at the agents. The leader moved his body, stroked his moustache, and stepped forward with a frown. He was angry at the calmness and indifference of the man, but this

same coolness prevented him from being sharp. At last, with a slight cough, he said: "It is said that you..... you keep weapons here, and have collected some papers against..... against the government of the caliph, Mutawakil. We .... We ask permission ".to search the house

When he heard no answer, he made a sign to his companions. They scattered - everything about searching for weapons, papers and letters, but found nothing. The leader spoke his last words and said: "O Abul Hasan! You must come with us to his "!holiness Mutawakil. There is no time to change clothes.... Come as you are

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The big door of the hall of the palace was opened, and Abul Hasan entered surrounded by the agents. The light of the hall was dazzling. The walls, which were covered with mirrors, were adorned with very valuable and most beautiful torches, making the walls look brilliant. The tall and large columns of the palace were decorated with the largest and most brilliant jewels and other ornaments. Mutawakil was leaning against his high seat, laughing happily and drunken. He was dressed in green clothes of pure silk, and his head was covered with colorful clothes, and he was .holding a gold cup full of wine

Abul Hasan, dressed in that same simple and coarse garment and looking composed, walked with short but firm steps in front of the row of servants and stood by Mutawakil's throne. At first Mutawakil shifted his body where he sat, but finally he felt .compelled to rise in respect for Abul Hasan

The agents narrated for Mutawakil all that had happened. Mutawakil, who seemed to be looking for something to do, reflected for a moment and stroked the large rings on his fingers. Then all of a sudden he offered the cup of wine to Abul Hasan. One of Mutawakil's advisers laughed quietly and said to another: "Do you see the tenth Imam of the Shi'ites? He is now facing the demand of such a strong ruler as the caliph. One ".day his falsehood must eventually be proved

"!Abul Hasan said calmly: "No wine has ever mingled with my blood and flesh

:Mutawakil tried another tactic, and said

"!Then, Abul Hasan, recite a poem that will please me" -

".A poem? I rarely recite poetry" -

"!You have no alternative but to recite" -

Heavy silence fell on the hall of the palace. All glances were turned to the dialog between Mutawakil and Abul Hasan. The advisor laughed again and said to another: "."This time his holiness's demand is much smarter than the first one

"?why do you say that" -

Hm.... Our Emir has demanded Abul Hasan to do something which is not forbidden" - like wine from Abul Hasan's viewpoint. Reciting a poem is something easy for him and he can not evade it. But...... ha...! the reciting of a man like him in a gathering of wine – ".bibbers will humiliate him

As Mutawakil was looking at his courtiers and friends, he raised the corner of his eyebrow and a smile of victory appeared on his lips. Meanwhile Abul Hasan seemed to be ready to recite a poem. He looked Mutawakil up and down, and then glanced at the whole

hall and its silent crowd. Then in a firm voice he began to recite the following lines:

"Do you know how kings spent the night?

In palaces and strong forts,

Above lofty peaks,

While valiant men

All night till dawn

Take watch over them.

But.....

Alas! That palaces, forts and peaks proved of no avail!

For, they were lowered to the graves from those

Forts after all that power and pomp!

Oh! What an awful descent!

After they were buried in the grave,

A cry descended upon them like a whip,

Saying: O' you! Where are those crowns

And thrones and rich garments of yours?

Where are those faces which were

Finally covered with laces and screens?

This was a cry.

Which they were asked by the grave.

:The grave said

These are the same handsome faces on

.Which worms roll about now

Indeed, those who ate and drank

,For such a long time in those palaces

Are now all eaten

" .After all those eating

The poem ended, and it seemed as if Mutawakil, too, had reached the end. On hearing the poem he shed so many tears that they seemed to shake the columns of the hall and make the lofty roof of the palace collapse. The

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walls seemed to grow closer together, squeezing the human bodies.

That night the palace resembled a grave!

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It was a few days that the Imam was in his sickbed. The spies had surrounded Imam's house. The news of his sickness had spread among the people too. They thought that the caliph had poisoned the Imam; but didn't dare to say anything out of fear of the caliph's soldiers. But whenever they saw me in the streets, they asked about Imam's .health and prayed for him

I could feel that the Imam was spending his last days. I was about to go crazy out of grief. I knew that I was getting close to hard and dark days, days which I could no longer have access to the Imam as easily as before. But there was nothing I could do. I had no idea of what I could do. I wanted the Imam to be happy and healthy for ever .so that I could be at his service and take his orders immediately

Two weeks ago Imam Hasan Askari sent for me and said, "Oqaid, go to Abol-adyan's ".house and ask him to come here immediately

I mounted a swift horse and passed through the dusty and dirt covered pathways and the green fields of 'Samera' and its long line of palm trees and came to Abol-adyan's house. He was eating breakfast. We greeted each other and then I conveyed Imam's message to him. He put down the bite he was holding and got up to change his .clothes. Then he mounted his horse and started off

Imam was waiting for him at home. Abol-adyan said salaam to the Imam and kissed his hand. Imam gave him a few letters. He had to take the letters to Madayen and .bring back the replies

Abol-adyan took the letters, kissed them and put them on his eyes. Imam had .confidence in him and sent for him for conveying important messages

Then, Imam looked at Abol-adyan with tearful

eyes and said, "You are a good friend. So I shall give you some news." After a short pause he continued, "Your trip will take fifteen days. When you come back, I will no ".longer be among you

Abol-adyan started to cry loudly. He knelt down in front of the Imam and took hold of his hand, kissing it several times. Imam's hand got wet from Abol-adyan's tears. Imam stroked his head with a hand full of kindness. Abol-adyan asked, "My lord, what "?should we do

".Imam said, "Be patient and, for God's sake, tolerate the upcoming hardships

Abol-adyan became silent and tried to hold back his tears and asked again, "After "?you, how can we find the 'Promised Mahdi' and how can we recognize him

Imam said with a smile, "You can recognize the Promised Mahdi in three ways; first, he will perform my funeral prayer. Secondly, he will want the replies to these letters from you. And thirdly, he will describe the contents of the pouches which will be ".brought for me

One week after Abol-adyan's departure, Imam's health suddenly deteriorated and he had to stay in bed. One day, as I was sitting by his side, someone knocked on the door. One of the servants opened the door. The vizier and a few of his staff entered the room. The vizier kissed Imam's hand and sat across him, next to his feet and said, "I heard about your illness. I went to the caliph and informed him about your condition. He immediately ordered five of his best physicians to attend to your health and cure you. By God's will you shall get well soon." Then vizier ordered the physicians to stay there, and paying his respect went away. I knew that there was more to all this. For sure, the Abbasids' government had poisoned the Imam; otherwise there was no way .that vizier could get informed this soon

I knew some of those physicians. They were proficient in their work but they worked for the caliph and took out his plans. That is why I was suspicious of them.

Day by day, Imam's physical condition worsened. His strong and healthy body had turned unbelievably pale and thin. Five days later, the vizier came to visit the Imam again and kissing his hand said, "O my God! How thin and pale you have turned?"

One of the physicians whispered to the vizier, "His health is really terrible and he will pass away in a few days."

The vizier ordered them to continue their stay and report every incident. I secretly heard what they said and conveyed them to the Imam. Imam knew everything.

A few hours later, the town's judge, accompanied with some of the aristocrats and a number of soldiers, came in and greeted the Imam and said, "The caliph has ordered these soldiers to stay here, and keep an eye on you."

By the order of Imam, we had submitted to God's will and were watching the caliph's game in silence. Those days were the hardest in my life.

The soldiers had eyes on us and followed us everywhere. How I hated the caliph. He counted the Imam's existence as a great danger for his government and that is why he had arrested and imprisoned the Imam several times. Once he sent the Imam to 'Wasif's jail'. He had ordered the guards to watch out for what the Imam did and to annoy him. But Imam's character influenced the guards greatly. Wasif found out about the sudden change in the attitude of the guards. He, being a stonehearted and cruel man, went to the caliph and told him that his guards, who had been frivolous and immoral men, have become believers of the Imam and turned into virtuous and

praying men. He added that if the Imam stayed in jail any longer, all of the guards would convert and they would revolt against the caliph. The caliph got worried and ordered for release of the Imam. This news was later told to Imam, by one of his .followers, who was in the caliph's palace

The soldiers and spies searched every where. They had found out that the 'Promised Mahdi' is the son of Imam Hasan Askari. And that he will fill the world with justice and fairness and will put an end to all tyrants. The physicians were careful. The midwives examined the wives of the Imam so that if they saw any sign of the 'Great Secret', they would inform it to the caliph. But God had uncovered his secret and completed .His light long ago

On the eighth of the month, Imam's health got worse than before. That is why he asked for my presence. I went to him quietly. The soldiers were all sleeping. Imam told me to close the door. Then he asked for a pen and paper, so that I could write a few letters to the Shias in different towns. Imam spoke in a quiet voice which could hardly be heard and I wrote down whatever he said. This is his letter to the Shias of ,"Medina

I invite you, oh Shias, to be pious and to struggle for God's satisfaction, and also to..." be honest and truthful. If you borrow something, give it back to its owner, whether he is a believer or a sinner. Be attentive and careful towards your prayers and prolong ".your prostrations. Be kind towards your neighbors and be gentle towards others

if you act likewise, they will tell each other that they are the Shias and followers of..." the Ahlul-Bayt. These words will please us. Try to be pious, because piety causes honor and glory. So, you should try to be the cause of our

honor and glory rather than the cause of our disgrace and shame. Attract the hearts .of the people toward us and discharge any bad and unlawful accusations of us

We are the household of the prophet. Koran counts us as sinless and infallible and has placed a right for us. Anyone apart from this household who claims such a right is a liar ".and a non-believer

Then we gave some medicine to Imam. At that time, apart from Imam, there were three other people present in the room; 'Narges khatoon'; the wife of Imam, and the mother of Imam Mahdi; the 'Promise Mahdi'; who was five years old; and I, being the .confident of the Imam

At this time the call to prayer echoed through the dark and gloomy sky of the town from the mosque. Imam handed me back the bowl of medicine to perform his morning prayer. I brought a piece of cloth and spread it on his legs so he could .perform his ablution

Imam prayed in the same sitting position. Then he took the bowl of medicine and brought it to his mouth; but his hand shook and the bowl hit against his teeth. Narges Khatoon took the bowl from his hand. At that moment, his soul flew from his body; .and his holiness went to meet his God

The room was filled with crying and weeping. The soldiers opened the door and entered, but there was no sign of Imam Mahdi. The news immediately got to the caliph and his vizier. After some time, Imam Hasan Askari's brother, Jafar, came into the room, anxious and drowsy. When he saw the lifeless body of Imam lying on the floor, he took a deep breath and covered his face in his hands, asking me to take the .body into the yard to prepare and wash it for burial

I didn't like Jafar. He was a corrupt and immoral man! He was a friend of the caliph and the vizier and

.obeyed them. All of the Shias kept distance from him

.Imam tried to guide him in the right path several times, but there was no use

Jafar wanted to take advantage of the situation and introduce himself as the successor of Imam Hasan Askari to the people. For this reason, he wanted to pray on the dead body of the Imam. Because he had heard that by the Order of God, only the .successor of Imam has the right to pray on the dead body of an Imam

I was sure that God would reveal the true face of Jafar, but at the same time, I was .nervous. I knew that something will come up, but I didn't know what that thing was

I took the body of the Imam to the yard. That night the sky was darker than ever. The .moon had hidden itself behind thick clouds. There was a chill in the air

The date palm trees were howling under the lashes of the wind. Crying could still be .heard from the house

The soldiers were careful and awaited for that 'Great Secret'. Little by little the darkness of the sky failed and turned bright. A group of the Imam's followers and friends, who had become informed of the event, had come there. They too were crying and hitting themselves on the chest and head. At this moment, Jafar entered the yard. The soldiers went to him one by one and congratulated him on his imamate! .Jafar pretended to be very sad

At this time, Abol-adyan came back from his trip and when he saw the tearful eyes of the people, scratched his face with his nails and his face was covered with his tears .and blood

We put the body in the direction of the kiblah. Jafar stood beside the body and prepared himself for prayer. Everyone present in the yard, stood behind him. He brought his hands up to say the Takbir. Suddenly a

beautiful child appeared in front of him and pulled at his garment saying, "step back ".uncle! I have the greater right to pray on the body of my father

Jafar turned pale and he became as white as a sheet and immediately went to one .side

"?One of the soldiers asked him, "Who is this child

"?Jafar answered, trembling, "How am I supposed to know

But I recognized that child. He was the 'Promised Mahdi', the twelfth Imam of the .Shias. I felt exceedingly from the inside

After the prayer, Imam Mahdi said to me, "Tell Abol-adyan to bring the answer to the ".letters

I gave him Imam Mahdi's message. He was stunned, like all of the other people who were present there. The soldiers were frozen on their spots. Imam passed them and went into the room. A moment later the soldiers came to themselves and searched .the entire house. But there was no trace of his holiness

When the sun spread its golden rays on the town, we took the body of the Imam to the square of the town. The news spread in the town and every shop was closed. The whole town came to the square, crying at the loss of the Imam. The town of 'Samera' .had never seen such a huge crowd of mourners

Abol-adyan and I had sat in a corner, next to Imam Mahdi when a group of the Shias entered on us and told us about what was happening in the town. They had come from Iran and had a bag with them. Imam informed them about the contents of the bag. They, who had become surprised about the knowledge of the Imam, gave the .bag to the Imam, kissed his hand and went out

Abol-adyan gave the reply of the letters to Imam Mahdi and went out of the house, ,having tears in his eyes

in the loss of Imam Hasan Askari, and a smile on his lips in the joy of seeing Imam .Mahdi

At that time, I recalled the promise of God who had said, "God will complete His Light, ".although the pagans my not like this

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It was afternoon. A strong and annoying wind was blowing. It scattered the soft soil into the air. The thorny bushes were in the hands of the wind and moved from side to .side with every blow

The innkeeper was standing in the veranda of the caravanserai. He was shielding his .face with a hand and looking at a faraway distance

Not very far, a caravan was emerging from the middle of the dust. The sound of the camels' bells was getting louder every moment. At last, the caravan passed through the gates of the town of "Samera" and came close to the caravanserai. "Moslem" came down from the veranda and ran towards the caravan to welcome the new .travelers

The travelers entered the courtyard of the caravanserai. They dismounted from their camels after the animals settled on the ground and started to unpack their belongings. Moslem came to the travelers and greeted them. From among them, a tall thin man came up with trembling steps. He removed his dusty Chafiyeh (shawl worn on the head by Arabs) from his face when he got close to Moslem. For a moment, Moslem stared at him, not believing his eyes. Then he ran towards him with a laughing :face, and embraced him

"?Ahmed, my dear friend what are you doing here"

Ahmed, the son of 'Jafar Hemyari' returned his friend's embrace. The two friends hugged one another intimately. Tears of happiness filled Moslem's eyes. He looked his friend up and down from behind his tears. Ahmed looked tired and sand covered his face. Sweat streaked his dusty features. His beard was grayer and longer than the .last time he had seen him. His eyes were sunken and his back seemed a bit bent

Moslem called his son. They took the luggage inside. The guests washed their faces and shook the dust off their clothes. Then they went to the cool basement. Moslem's .son brought them fresh dates and milk

Ahmed leaned on the wall and put his weight on his thin legs. Moslem sat next to Ahmed and put a hand on his shoulder. "I sought you in heavens old man, what are .you doing here?" He asked

Ahmed smiled and said, "I fell sick some time ago. I was on my deathbed, and short of breath. The doctors held no hope for my recovery. I made a vow that if I stayed alive I ".would visit Imam Hasan Askari

:Moslem gave a long sigh. Ahmed noticed his sad look and said

I know. We were close to Baghdad when we were informed of Imam Hasan Askari's" martyrdom. After this news, we should have returned; however, we had another ".matter to attend to. So we had to continue on our trip

"?You have probably brought the religious tax sum of the people of Qom with you"

Yes; it was only a short while after my recovery when I heard that some of the well" known people of the town were going to visit the Imam, so I joined them to see the ".Imam

Ahmed fixed his eyes on the burning light that trembled with the evening breeze and .cast its shadow on the smoke covered wall

By the way, what is to become of us Shi'as? Who is our leader, guardian, and Imam" .after Imam Hasan Askari (p.b.u.h)?" He murmured

The food was served. They ate in silence. A hidden sadness ached their hearts, which .prevented them from speaking

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.After finishing their food, the guests circled around Moslem

.Who is Imam now?" They asked him"

Moslem turned his face and looked each of his friends in the eye. "I don't know for sure. A lot of rumors are around. Our enemies are trying to mislead the people with their false propaganda. The brother of Imam Hasan Askari, Jafar, has claimed to be the next Imam. But you all know him very well. He openly commits wrong, and has .relations with the wicked caliph and his court." He answered

Then he lowered his voice and continued: "it is whispered among Shi'as that 'The Promised Mahdi' has suddenly appeared and prayed on the body of his honorable ".father

.Have you done anything for recognition of the Imam?" Ahmed asked"

The host shook his head sadly and said, "no one dares to ask anything out of fear of ".the caliph's secret agents

The guests said nothing more because they were all deep in their thoughts. At last, the old man got up, performed ablution and stood to prayer. After praying, the tired .travelers went to bed after a long journey

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Moslem was preparing the mid-day meal when the guests came back. All of them .were sad and seemed disappointed. After praying, they sat to eat

.What's the matter, why are you all so sad?" Moslem asked"

This morning we decided to pay Jafar a visit, and examine him. We asked for his" address and found his

home. He had a grand and expensive house. We knocked at the door; a slave girl came to the door and said that he had gone to riverside of 'Tigris' for amusement. We went towards the river. Over there we saw a black slave sitting on a rock, with a stick in his hand. We asked for Jafar. He showed us a boat on the river. A large boat, larger than a fishing boat was floating on the water and slowly getting away from the shore. A man, whom we later acknowledged to be Jafar, was resting on a cushion. A few people surrounded him, and they were eating grapes and laughing. On the other side of the boat, a musician was playing an instrument. The image, which we previously .had of Jafar, was again revived

An hour passed and the boat came back to shore. The slave got on his feet, held his clothes up and went in the water. Then he held the boathook and pulled the boat towards the shore. Jafar got off and the slave introduced us to him. He stared at us with red and swollen eyes. Jafar came towards us, but nearly fell down because he was drunk. The slave wanted to help him but Jafar pushed him away. The musician .was slowly singing to himself

We greeted each other. We gave him our condolence on the death of his brother. He shook his head indifferently. According to what we had planned, we congratulated him on his Imamate. He gave a loud laughter, and asked about what we wanted. We said that we had come from Qom, and had brought some money with us, which was the religious tax sum of the people and had been sent for Imam Askari (p.b.u.h). But, .since the Imam had been martyred, we did not know whom we should give it to

Jafar's eyes sparkled with joy. He embraced us and invited us to his home. We went .with him to his house. He was hospitable towards us, and then asked for the money

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But we refused to hand them to him. He asked for the reason. We told him that a story lied behind the money; every few Dinars of it, which had been put in a pouch and sealed, belonged to one of the Shi'as. It has been a custom in the past that when we brought the money to Imam Hadi or Imam Askari (p.b.u.t), he would identify the money without seeing it. For example, he would have said who has sent how much money or what was the design on the coins. Now you must also speak of these kinds .of secrets to us

Jafar was terrified from what we had said and started to panic. First, he kindly asked us to give him the money. When he saw our reluctance, he suggested gifts and then threatened us; but we weren't afraid. Then he got angry and said, "You are falsely accusing my brother; for Imam does not have knowledge of 'the Secrets and Unseen.' This 'knowledge' belongs only to God. Whoever believes that Imam possesses the ".knowledge of 'The Secrets', considers God as having an associate

We got into a discussion with him, and by using verses from Quran; we proved to him that God has given "the Knowledge of the past and the future" to infallible Imams. Having no answer, Jafar raised his voice and threatened us to death. At that moment, his slaves flew into the room to beat us. We got out of there, as fast as we could. .However, Jafar said that he would complain against us to the caliph and his vizier

Ahmed sighed deeply. His lips were still trembling, and his eyes were filled with tears. "?The host consoled with him and asked: "What are you going to do now

The situation is a dangerous one. We better pack our luggage straight away and" .return to Qom," one of the Shi'as answered

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It's better to stay here till we get a clear idea of what we have to do and what is to" .become of this money. We are responsible towards our people," another argued

All of you know that Jafar has had a long friendship with the caliph Mo'tamed and his" .vizier; and they would listen to what he has to say," the third one said

There has been a rumor going on that Jafar has presented two thousand gold Dinars" to the caliph, so that the caliph would introduce him as the 'Imam of the Shi'as' to the .people

The caliph has lots of trouble. He no longer has ant time to attend to these things..."" .Ahmed said

An old man proposed the last idea: "we must stay here till God distinguishes between ".the truth and the void, and show us the real Imam

* * *

There was an hour left to sunset. The tall palms, tired of the heat were waiting for the night. The passageways were empty of people, but the sound of quick footsteps broke the silence. The soldiers had got hold of the Shi'as of Qom, and were taking .them towards the palace

Jafar was standing next to the caliph. When the Shi'as entered and paid their respect, Jafar repeated what had previously happened. The caliph asked the Shi'as to explain. Ahmed took a step forward and repeated what he had told Jafar. The caliph thought ".for a moment, and said: "your words are logical, and reason accepts them

With all the trouble on his hands, the caliph didn't want to add to them, so he continued: " these men are the representatives of the people of Qom, and have been

appointed to hand over the property of the people under special circumstances to a particular person; since Jafar doesn't have those qualifications, the representatives ".have the right to return the money to their owners

The session came to an end. Not feeling safe from Jafar's fury, the Shi'as asked the caliph to appoint some soldiers to guard them. He accepted their request and ordered a number of soldiers to protect the Shi'as and accompany them next morning up to a distance outside the town. Jafar also stood up and left the meeting. However, later on .he realized his mistakes and repented to God

* * *

That night all the guests were sad and uneasy. They had packed their belongings in order to leave town before daybreak. They had traveled a great distance in the hope of seeing the Imam. They had passed dry deserts, sky-high mountains, dangerous valleys, and roaring rivers. However, with the martyrdom of Imam Askari (p.b.u.h), they found themselves alone. Their hope was fading and despair grasped them with its claws. Nobody went to sleep that night. They all stood to night prayer, begging and :chanting to God

O' God, we attested your Oneness and obeyed your last Messenger, Prophet" Mohammed (peace be upon him and his family). Now show us your Imam and Hojjah on earth, for if we don't acknowledge him, we will be mis-leaded and drown in the sea ".of disbelief, ignorance, and tyranny

* * *

The sky was covered with thousands of shining stars. A pleasant breeze was blowing which gently swayed

the leaves. The soldiers were still yawning. The camels fixed their big eyes on the vast .desert ahead, while chewing the cud

The sad and tired travelers were agitated. They fixed the luggage on the camels and examined them. After finishing their work, they all embraced Moslem. The travelers put their heads on his shoulder and chanted words of prayer in hope of seeing him .again

The caravan set on its journey back, and the sound of bells broke the silence of the desert. The soldiers were cautious of their surroundings, but everybody knew that their real mission was to send out the Shi'a travelers from the town. The caliph had lots of trouble and wanted to banish them from the town, in a respectful manner, as .soon as possible

The stars twinkled in the sky, but the sleepy travelers, neither saw the stars, nor felt .the pleasant coolness of the desert. They were lost in the mist of pain and despair

Some time passed ant the sun spread its golden rays on the desert. The crickets stopped chirping. The soldiers turned back. At this time, a sound echoed through the desert. Everybody stared at his surrounding. In the distance a cloud of dust had risen. A horse-rider came close to them. The younger ones got hold of their swords and the elders stopped the camels. A single rider galloped closer to them. He had covered his face with his shawl. When he got to the caravan, he stopped a few steps from them. He dismounted and greeted them. He was armless. The travelers were relieved and .greeted him back

The man got closer and removed his shawl. He was a tall, good-looking youth. Ahmed noticed the light of belief in his large black eyes, and immediately liked him. "Who is Ahmed the son of Jafar Hemyari?" the young

.man asked

.His voice was warm and soothing

.The old man stepped forward and introduced himself

.Your master and lord, the Imam (p.b.u.h) wants to see you." The young man told him"

A commotion rose from among the travelers. What bliss! The light of certitude shone upon every heart. There was no time to waste. They turned back and galloped as fast as they could towards Samara, and secretly went to Imam Askari's home. The same house, where they had visited, many times before, and had met Imam Askari In, the .house, which evoked in them hundreds of spiritual memories

* * *

Permission for entrance was given and they went inside. Opposite them, where Imam Askari used to sit, an honorable child was sitting on a bedstead. He was wearing a green garment. The guests were incapable of looking at his countenance. All that majesty and divine magnificence dazzled their eyes. Their bodies were filled with a soft and pleasant tremble. Tears of delight filled their eyes. From behind the tears, they looked at the brilliant visage of Imam Mahdi. This face was familiar to them. Where had they seen it? How much he resembled Imam Askari and Imam Hadi! They felt themselves sitting opposite the prophet, Ali, Hasan and Hossein (p.b.u.t). They found themselves in the presence of all Imams. Their hearts were pounding in their .chests

The Shi'as bowed down spontaneously in order to thank God for responding to their ,prayers and relieving them of confusion and distress. Then they went forward

kissed the hands of Imam Mahdi and sat back in their place. Their anxiety gave its .place to a spiritual calmness. Days of sorrow and grief had ended

Imam asked about their health and retold the incidents that happened in their trip from beginning to end. He identified the owners of the money. He told the design on the coins and the sealed waxes and revealed a drop of the eternal sea of his .knowledge

The Shi'as were sitting down bewildered. The divine bless and bounty of seeing their Imam was much greater than they could think of. There was no need for the Imam to speak or give the characteristics of the coins and their owners; they could sense the .scent and smell of Imamate, and see the Divine light in his countenance

Imam Mahdi told them not to visit Samera any more and instead go to Baghdad from then on, and give the religious sums to his agents over there. Also they should tell them their problems, ask them probable questions and receive the answers. Then Imam gave some embalment (a fragrant substance used for the dead) and a shroud .to Ahmed and told him that he would soon pass away

It was time to leave, because the spies of the caliph were always on the watch. Imam gave them permission to leave. The guests again kissed the hands of the Imam and .left the house

The caravan started its journey again. However, this time it was filled with faith and hope. Ahmed thought with himself that his biggest dream had come true and he could close his eyes and leave this world in peace. However, the others desired to live and see Imam Mahdi again, for if it were not for this wish their souls would had left their .bodies right then

t:۱۰۶

About center

In the name of Allah

هَلْيَسْتَوِيالَّذِينَيَعْلَمُونَوَالَّذِينَلَايَعْلَمُونَ

?Are those who know equal to those who do not know

al-Zumar: ٩

:Introduction

Ghaemiyeh Computer Research Institute of Isfahan, from ٢٠٠٧, under the authority of Ayatollah Haj SayyedHasanFaqihImami (God blesses his soul), by sincere and daily efforts of university and seminary elites and sophisticated groups began its activities .in religious, cultural and scientific fields

:Manifesto

Ghaemiyeh Computer Research Institute of Isfahan in order to facilitate and accelerate the accessibility of researchers to the books and tools of research, in the field of Islamic science, and regarding the multiplicity and dispersion of active centers in this field

and numerous and inaccessible sources by a mere scientific intention and far from any kind of social, political, tribal and personal prejudices and currents, based on performing a project in the shape of (management of produced and published works from all Shia centers) tries to provide a rich and free collection of books and research papers for the experts, and helpful contents and discussions for the educated generation and all classes of people interested in reading, with various formats in the .cyberspace

:Our Goals are

(propagating the culture and teachings of Thaqalayn (Quran and Ahlulbayt p.b.u.t-

encouraging the populace particularly the youth in investigating the religious issues-

replacing useful contents with useless ones in the cellphones, tablets and computers-

providing services for seminary and university researchers-

spreading culture study in the publich-

paving the way for the publications and authors to digitize their works-

:Policies

acting according to the legal licenses-

relationship with similar centers-

avoiding parallel working-

merely presenting scientific contents-

mentioning the sources-

.It's obvious that all the responsibilities are due to the author

:Other activities of the institute

Publication of books, booklets and other editions-

Holding book reading competitions-

Producing virtual, three dimensional exhibitions, panoramas of religious and tourism- places

.Producing animations, computer games and etc-

Launching the website with this address: www.ghaemiyeh.com-

Fabricatingdramatic and speech works-

Launching the system of answering religious, ethical and doctrinal questions-

Designing systems of accounting, media and mobile, automatic and handy systems,- web kiosks

Holding virtual educational courses for the public-

Holding virtual teacher-training courses-

Producing thousands of research software in three languages (Persian, Arabic and- English) which can be performed in computers, tablets and cellphones and available and downloadable with eight international formats: JAVA, ANDROID, EPUB, CHM, PDF, HTML, CHM, GHB on the website

Also producing four markets named "Ghaemiyeh Book Market" with Android, IOS,- WINDOWS PHONE and WINDOWS editions

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